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THREE TALES:

CHRISTINE VAN AMBERG,

RESIGNATION,

AND

THE VILLAGE DOCTOR:

BY

THE COUNTESS D'ARBOUVILLE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

MAUNSELL B. FIELD, M.A.

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INTRODUCTION.

An abbreviated translation of the first of the three following stories appeared in Blackwood's Magazine some years since. The preparer of the present version was so deeply interested by this fragmentary sketch, that he immediately took measures to procure a copy of the original. It is not necessary for him to say to those who shall peruse the following pages, that his anticipated gratification was more than realized. In a recent number of one of the prominent British Reviews, he found "Une Histoire Hollandaise," or "Christine Van Amberg," spoken of as the most perfect specimen of fictitious composition which France has produced in the present century. This is high, but perhaps not extravagant praise. It induced him at once to undertake a complete translation of the Countess d'Arbouville's tales, which is here presented to the public. He would add, that he has endeavored to follow the original as closely as idiom of language and of thought would permit. This was necessary, as much of the beauty of these touching stories consists in the exquisite word-painting.

It is also proper to state that the translator has been informed that "The Village Doctor" has already been done into English in this country for an Eastern periodical, although he has never happened to see the book in question.

There is a tender freshness, a simple truthfulness about

Madame d'Arbouville's tales very delightful in these days of false meteors. They are, in all respects, the reverse of the ordinary productions of French romance writers. They are equally free from exaggerated sentiment and specious immorality. Their construction is eminently dramatic, and yet they appear unaffectedly natural. So, at least, do they seem to the translator, whose labor has been entirely a labor of love.

The following account of the authoress and of the book preceded the Blackwood sketch:

"In the year 1843, a fancy fair was held at Paris, for the benefit of the sufferers by an earthquake in the island of Guadaloupe. The patronage of the Queen of the French, added to the strong sympathy awakened by the catastrophe, filled the bazaar with a gay throng, delighted to combine amusement with charity, and to chaffer for baubles with aristocratic saleswomen. Amidst the multitude of tasteful trifles exposed for sale, was a contribution from Queen Marie Amélie—fifty books, printed at the royal press and elegantly bound. They were fifty copies of a volume containing three charming tales, and soon it was whispered that no others had been printed, and that the author was a lady of rank, distinguished for grace and wit, but whose literary talents were previously unknown, save to a limited circle of discreet and admiring friends. At the queen's request, and at the voice of pity, pleading for the unfortunates of Point-à-Pitre, she had sanctioned the printing of fifty copies; these taken, the types had been broken up. Such rumors were more than sufficient to stimulate curiosity, and raise the value of the volume. Everybody knows that an author's title often sells a stupid book; should any doubt it, we refer them to our friends Puff & Co.; how much greater the attraction when the book is a clever one, written by a countess, printed by a sovereign's command, and at a royal press. The market rose instantly. Sixty francs, eighty francs, five Napoleons, were

freely given; how much higher competition raised the price we cannot say; but we are credibly informed the improvement did not stop there.

"The editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* was not the last to hear the history of the volume. He procured a copy, and esteeming it unjust to reserve for a few what was meant for mankind, by limiting the produce of so graceful a pen to the narrow circulation of fifty copies—he laid violent hands upon one of the tales, and reprinted it in his excellent and widely-circulated periodical. Although literally a day after the fair, it was not the less acceptable and successful. The tale, whose title is "Resignation," was attributed by many to the amiable Duchess of Orleans, then in the first year of her widowhood. The real authoress is the Countess d'Arbouville, wife of the lieutenant-general of that name, granddaughter of Madame d'Houdetot, and niece by marriage of Monsieur de Barante. Inheriting much of the wit of her celebrated ancestress, and no small share of the literary aptitude of her accomplished uncle, this lady, without aiming at the reputation of a woman of letters, writes tales of very remarkable merit. While her husband, as governor of Constantine, wields the sabre in defence of Algeria, the countess, secluded in her boudoir, beguiles her leisure and delights her friends by the exercise of her pen. Last spring, it became known that she had completed the matter of a second volume. Thereupon, she was so besieged by petitioners for the favor of a perusal, that, in self-defence, and out of regard to the integrity of her manuscript, she was compelled to print fifty copies for private circulation. Through the kindness of a Parisian friend, one of these has reached us. It contains two tales. The first, "Le Medecin du Village," (The Village Doctor,) is a simple and touching story, highly attractive by its purity of style and exquisite feeling. The circumstances under which it was printed forbid criticism; otherwise we might cavil at its introduction as unartistical,

and at one of the incidents—the restoration of an idiot boy of fifteen to unclouded reason—as unprecedented and out of nature. But one dwells not on these blemishes whilst reading the old doctor's affecting tale, which does equal honor to the heart and mind of the authoress. We would gladly produce it before our readers in an English dress, but the indefatigable Monsieur Buloz, ever watchful of the interests of his review, has already pounced upon it. It had scarcely been printed when he transferred it to the pages of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. We are obliged, therefore, to content ourselves with the second tale, no way inferior to its fellow, but whose greater length compels us to abridge. This we would fain avoid, for even without such curtailment it is impossible to render in another language the full charm of the original, a charm residing in delicacy of style and touch rather than in description or incident. We will do our best, however; and should the attempt meet the eye and disapproval of Madame d'Arbouville, we wish it may stimulate her to print her next work by thousands instead of tens, that all conversant with the French tongue may have opportunities of reading and appreciating the productions of so pleasing a writer."

CHRISTINE VAN AMBERG.

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Christine Van Amberg.

The sun rose—not brilliant and radiant like the sun of Spain or Italy, when his bright effulgence, glowing over the horizon, recalls suddenly to life all that breathes; when, his golden rays mingling with the deep blue of a southern sky, everything seems full of sap and vigor, as if light produced life; the sun rose over the cold land of Holland; the clouds separated to allow the passage of a pale light, without warmth and without brilliancy. All nature passed insensibly from sleep to waking, and still continued torpid, when no longer slumbering. It was life in silence. No cry, no song of joy, no flight of birds, no lowing of herds salute the day. On the summit of the dykes, the hedges of reeds bend to the breeze, and the sea-sand, sweeping over this weak obstacle, falls upon the meadows and covers their verdure with a moving veil. A river with yellow waves, heavy with the slime of its banks, flows on quietly, without

energy, and without love, towards the ocean which awaits it. From afar, its waters and its banks appear of the same color, and only present the aspect of a sandy plain, except when a ray of light flashing upon the wave, some silvery sparkles reveal the river's course. Boats heavily freighted pass along, towed by a team of horses who plunge their clumsy feet deep in the sand, raise them, plunge them again, and advance without haste to their journey's end, apparently unconscious of fatigue. Behind them a peasant walks with his whip upon his shoulder; he pays no attention to the river which flows by, to the animals which are towing, nor to the boat which follows; he walks, and to reach his destination makes use of nothing but perseverance.

Such is not the general aspect of Holland, but such is one of the corners of the picture which strikes the weary eye of the traveller when he journeys over the north of that country, which seems, more than any other, charged to make respected the command of God to the sea: "*Thou shalt go no farther!*"

This silence—this repose of all nature, animate and inanimate—this subdued light—these shades everywhere indistinct—these great plains without any of the evidences of life and activity upon them—all this has its poetry. Wherever there is silence and space, poetry finds its place; it has a love for all things—smiling landscapes and melancholy deserts; a bird

of light wing, everything suffices for it to rest upon—everything bears it on—everything sustains it—a blade of grass often suffices.

Holland, which the poet Butler called "*a great ship, always at anchor*," has its beauty for the reflecting mind. One is slow to admire, but one admires at last, this land at war with the sea, struggling from day to day to defend its existence—those patient and courageous men, who behind a broken rampart raise another rampart—those towns which compel the waves to flow at the feet of their walls—to follow the route marked out—to confine themselves to the channel dug for them; and then those days of revolt, when the water, as if in recollection of its original nature, endeavors to reconquer its independence, overflows, inundates, destroys, and finally, by the strength of man's hands, is calmed, and again becomes obedient. There life resembles the evening after a battle; there is fatigue, pride, and triumph. The unexcitable inhabitant of this country possesses that motive-power of all things—*will*. He is sure of success because he wills to succeed; he is calm because he is strong; he acts slowly because he reflects. There is in the silence of serious things a beauty which the mind should study to comprehend as it comprehends the harmony of a song—as it sees the colors of a picture.

At the moment of sunrise, a little boat was gliding

rapidly down the stream. A pair of oars, skilfully managed, struck the water and caused it to sparkle and foam. There was only one person in the boat—a young man, tall, lithe, full of activity and strength; he guided his bark along the windings of the shore, avoiding the channel in the middle of the river, although he diminished his speed by so doing—and, nevertheless, he was in evident haste, as if fearing that he was behind time. But, at this early hour the country was deserted, and the birds alone in their waking had anticipated the young man. He had laid down his gray felt hat near him, and his chestnut hair, thrown back by the wind which blew upon his face, left exposed features of remarkable regularity, a broad forehead and slightly pensive eyes, like those of the men of the North. He wore the costume of a student of the German Universities. His extreme youth indicated that the confined life of the school constituted all his past, and that it was still a new pleasure for him to feel upon his brow the freshness of the morning, and to float down the river in his boat. He was evidently in haste, for there are moments in life when we always miscalculate time. We arrive too early and we believe ourselves too late; but, since we cannot compel time to accelerate its course, it is at least agreeable to wait at the appointed spot. Our impatience is quieted; happiness seems already commenced.

When the little boat had rounded one of the projections of the shore which jutted out like a promontory, it seemed to fly still more rapidly, as if the eye which directed it had caught sight of its intended destination. In truth, a short distance beyond, the aspect of the country changed. A meadow sloped down to the river's side, and a thick hedge of almost up-rooted willows, bending over towards the water, formed upon that side the limit of the meadow. With a few more strokes of the oar, the boat arrived within the shadow of the willows and stopped. The oars fell at the sides; a chain thrown over the branch of a tree fastened the bark, which swayed gently, cradled by the current of the river. The young man stood up and looked anxiously through the foliage; then, not trusting to his eyes, he sang in a low tone the refrain of a ballad, a love complaint, the national poetry of all the countries of the earth. His voice, at first subdued, in order not to break upon the surrounding silence too abruptly, gradually rose with the last notes of the song; but the vibrating sounds rolled through the foliage, and died away without echo upon the grass of the meadow.

Then the young man sat down and contemplated the peaceful picture which lay before his eyes. The gray sky was melancholy for him who looked upon it with neither joy nor hope in his heart. The river rolled on noiselessly its cold and turbid waters. To

the left, the plain extended afar, without any undulation of the soil. Several mills displayed their great extended wings waiting for wind, and the wind, too feeble, passed by them and left them motionless. To the right, at the further extremity of the little meadow which sloped down towards the willows, the only green spot in this arid waste, stood a square house, built of red bricks; it was isolated, silent, and gloomy. The thick and greenish window-panes refused to reflect back the rays of the sun. Gilded weather-cocks of strange designs ornamented the roof. A garden was laid out in formal squares upon the sand. A few tulips drooping their heads, too heavy for their stalks, and some dahlias attached to supports of white wood, were the only flowers which were seen to bloom, stifled and surrounded by little hedges of box. The wind swept over them and carried away no perfume. A number of stunted trees, slaves to the owner's caprice, were trimmed into a wall, or assumed a thousand fantastic shapes. Their foliage was covered with dust. Occasional figures of terra-cotta were placed along the complicated windings of the paths, which were confined to a limited space. One of these paths led to the hedge of willows. There, nature had resumed her rights, and the wearied eye found agreeable relief in the trees growing freely and unrestrained, and in the water which flowed below. It had undermined the shore,

and attacked the roots of the trees; the willows drooped over towards the river, their bending trunks forming flying bridges, to complete which only a corresponding shore was wanting. Nevertheless, the bank was high enough for a certain distance to intervene between the up-rooted trees and the water which flowed below. A few of the larger branches swept the surface of the river, and received from its current a perpetual motion. Their twigs shone under the water, and seemed to regret their inability to follow it in its course.

It was under this dome of verdure that the little boat was moored. There the young man mused, his eye wandering from the sky, as gloomy as his heart, to the stream as uncertain as his destiny. Some of the willow leaves brushed his brow when the undulations of the boat brought him near the trees; one of his hands hanging over the side of the boat felt the cool contact of the water; a soft, gentle breeze played in his hair; nameless flowerets which had sprung up at the feet of the willows, beyond the influence of their shade, wafted towards the water perfumes which were detectable at intervals, according to the caprice of the wind; a bird concealed in the foliage was singing an amorous melody, and, cradled in his bark, the young student waited for the woman whom he loved. Ungrateful that he was! He accused time of lagging; he urged it to speed on; he

was insensible to the charms of the passing hour. Oh! if he ever grows old, how well will he understand that destiny was then giving him the most precious treasures of life: hope and youth!

Suddenly the student started; he stood up in the boat, and with outstretched neck and eyes fixed upon the foliage of the willows, listened, scarce daring to breathe. The branches parted, and the face of a young girl, almost a child, was revealed to his gaze.

"Christine!" he exclaimed.

The young girl placed her foot upon the trunk of the tree which inclined the most; then gracefully placing herself upon this movable seat, which her weight, slight as it was, caused to sway, she leaned her arm upon one of the branches which drooped towards the water, and in this position her hand reached her lover's. He pressed it passionately. Then the young girl drew back; the tree, partly relieved of its burden, as if in obedience to her will, yielded to the impulse, and the youth, seated in his boat, conversed with his eyes raised towards the willow upon which she whom he loved was reclining.

Christine Van Amberg had nothing of the characteristic features of the country which had given her birth. Tresses as black as the raven's wing harmonized with a face full of energy and decision. There was that in her large, deep eyes, under which falsehood must have quailed; eye-brows almost straight,

and strongly marked, would have given, perhaps, a little too much character to this youthful head, if a charming expression of truth and innocence had not produced rather the effect of a child's face than that of a woman. Christine was fifteen years old; a small band of silver encircled her black hair; this was, according to the custom of her country, the ornament of festival days; but for the young Hollander the happiest festival day was that on which she met her lover. She wore a dress of flowered muslin of a pale blue color, and her mantle of black silk was thrown over her hair and fell down upon her shoulders, the better to conceal her from any prying eye. Seated upon the trunk of a tree whose branches surrounded her, and close by the water, Christine was as lovely as Shakspeare's Ophelia. But although young, beautiful, and beloved, a profound melancholy was expressed upon her face; her companion gazed at her in sadness, his eyes almost filled with tears.

"Herbert," said the young girl, bending her head towards her lover, "Herbert be not so sad. We have both of us too many days yet to live, to live them in unhappiness. Herbert, a better time will come."

"Christine, they have refused me your hand—they have closed the door of your dwelling against me—they are determined to separate us—they will succeed—to-morrow, perhaps!"

"Never!" exclaimed the young girl, and a gleam

like lightning passed over her face; but like lightning too, this energetic expression only lasted for a moment, and gave place to a look of calm sadness.

"If you were only willing, Christine!—if you were only willing—how easy it would be to flee together—to go and unite our destinies in a foreign land, and to live for one another, forgotten and happy! I would take you to fair lands where the sun shines as you say that you see it shine in your dreams; I would lead you upon the summit of high mountains whence the eye overlooks an immense horizon. You would behold magnificent forests with foliage of a thousand tints; a fresh, vivifying wind would blow upon your cheek, and you would forget these fogs, this damp land, these monotonous plains! We would love one another in fair countries!"

While Herbert was speaking, the face of the young girl became animated; she fancied that she saw what he described; her brilliant eye was fixed upon the horizon as if eager to penetrate beyond; her mouth opened as if to breathe in the air of the mountain; but she abruptly passed her hand over her eyes, and with a profound sigh exclaimed:—

"No, no, I must remain here! Herbert, this is my country; why must I suffer? Why am I oppressed with such a weight of sadness? In dreams I recall another sky—another land; but these are only dreams. I was born here, and I have never passed beyond the

enclosure of the meadow. My mother has too frequently sung at my cradle the ballads and boleros of her native Seville; she has talked to me too much of Spain, and I love that unknown land as we love an absent friend whom we would fain again see!"

The young girl cast a melancholy glance upon the river, which a thick fog was beginning to cover. A few drops of rain pattered upon the leaves; she folded her mantle upon her bosom, and chilled by the raw air, a shudder passed over her frame.

"Leave me, Christine, you are ill! Return to your home, and since you are unwilling to accept my roof or my hearth, go back to those who can give you both protection and warmth!"

A gentle smile trembled upon Christine's lips.

"Herbert," she said, "near you, I prefer the rain which wets my hair; I prefer this rough branch; I prefer this sharp wind to my seat at home, far from you, beside the fire of the great chimney. Oh! with what joy, with what confidence, leaning upon your arm, would I start on foot to traverse the world, with no other fortune than your love; but—but—"

"What is it that prevents you, Christine? Is it your father's love, your sisters' affection, the happiness of your home?"

The young girl turned pale.

"It is wrong, Herbert; it is wrong to speak thus!

I know that my father does not love me, that my sisters are not kind to me, that my home is a gloomy one; well indeed do I know it; above all, I know that I love you, and I will go—if my mother will only give her consent."

The young man, surprised at these words, replied:

"Child that you are! Never will such a consent be breathed by your mother; these are things for which we must have the strength and the will in our own hearts, and in regard to which we should pay no attention to the judgment of others; your mother will never consent."

"Perhaps—" replied Christine, in a grave and slow voice, "my mother loves me—I resemble her—and her heart is familiar with mine. My mother knows that the Bible says that a woman shall leave her father and her mother to follow her husband; she is aware of our attachment, and since the door has been closed against you, I have not shed a single tear that my mother has not detected; another tear has always glistened in her eye in sympathy with mine. You do not know my mother, Herbert; something tells me that she has suffered—that she knows that a little happiness is as necessary to life as the air we breathe. No, indeed, I should not be surprised if some time, while imprinting a kiss upon my brow, as she does every evening when we are alone, she should whisper to me: 'Go, my poor child!'"

"I cannot believe it, Christine; she will tell you to obey, to be consoled, to forget, and I—shall die!"

"To forget, Herbert! My mother does not forget. Forgetfulness is the resource of weak hearts. No—no one shall tell me to forget!" And Christine's eyes flashed with a gloomy fire; but over this brow of fifteen years, it was like the rapid passage of a light which illuminated it a second and then expired. It was a revelation of the future rather than an expression of the present. An ardent soul dwelt in her, but had not yet cast off all the veils of childhood. It was struggling to make its way, and at times partially successful, a word or cry revealed its presence.

"No, I shall never forget," added Christine, "for I love you and you love me—me who am so little loved! To you I appear neither mad nor fantastic nor capricious; you understand my dreamings—the thousand thoughts which pass through my mind. I am very young, Herbert, and yet, with my hand in yours, I answer for the future of my whole life. I shall always love you—and see, I do not weep. I have faith in the eventual happiness of our love; how—when—I know not; it is the secret of God who created me, and who cannot have placed me upon the earth only to suffer. He will send me happiness whenever it shall please him; but sooner or later, he will certainly send it! Yes, I am young and full of life; I have need of air and space; I shall not live

shut up and stifled here. The world is large, and I will know it; my heart is full of love, and will love forever. No tears, Herbert! Obstacles shall be—*must* be overcome, for I *will* be happy!"

"Christine! my love! my wife! why delay? An opportunity neglected may never present itself again. One minute frequently decides an entire existence. Perhaps at this very moment happiness is near us! A leap into this boat—a few strokes of the oar—and we are united forever!—perhaps, if you place your foot upon the ground, we are forever separated. Come, Christine, come; the wind is rising. There, at the bottom of my boat is a sail which will swell and bear us away as quickly as the bird cleaves the air!"

Tears flowed down Christine's burning cheeks. She shuddered and looked alternatively upon her lover and the horizon, and thought of liberty; she hesitated, and a painful struggle overwhelmed the mind of this child. She hid her head in the branches of the willows; she twined her arms around the trunk of the tree which supported her, as if to resist the impulse to allow herself to drop into the boat, and then, in stifled tones, she murmured these words: "My mother!" A few moments afterwards, Christine, raising her pale countenance, resumed with composure:

"Whom would my mother have to speak to of her beloved country, if I should abandon her? Who

would weep with her when she weeps, if I left. She has other children, but they are gay and happy; they do not resemble her; only my mother and I are sad in our house. My absence would kill my mother. I must have her farewell blessing, or I must remain at her side—like her, chilled by the climate—imprisoned in yonder walls—ill treated by those who do not love us. Herbert, I will not fly; I will wait!" And she made a movement to regain the bank.

"One moment more! one moment, Christine! A vague fear possesses me—an icy presentment weighs upon my heart. Dearest! should we never meet again! this willow—this boat—this little spot of earth covered with moss and reeds! you—you here near me! Can it be that the brightest hour of my life has just fled by?"

The young man hid his head in his hands and burst into tears.

Christine's heart beat violently; she summoned up her courage. Sliding from the trunk of the tree, her feet touched the ground, and thus separated from the boat, which could not come quite up to the shore, she said:—

"Farewell, Herbert; the time will come when I shall be your loving and faithful wife; I know that it will. Let us both pray to God that the happy time may come soon! Farewell to meet again, for my heart is yours!"

The hedge of reeds and willows opened before the young girl—a few small branches crackled beneath her feet—a slight rustling was heard in the grass and in the bushes, as when a bird takes flight, and then all was silent.

Herbert wept.

The clock in the red brick house struck eight. In the sitting-room, which served as a parlor, the family of the merchant Van Amberg was assembled for breakfast. One person was absent. Christine had not yet returned. Near the fire-place stood the head of the family, Karl Van Amberg, and by his side his brother, who, although older than himself, had yielded to him the privileges of his birth. Madame Van Amberg was working near a window, and her two elder daughters, light-haired and fair-complexioned children of Holland, were superintending the breakfast arrangements.

Karl Van Amberg, the dreaded head of this family, was of lofty stature. His figure was stiff; his expression passionless. His face, the features of which at first sight appeared insignificant, indicated that to rule was a necessity of his nature. His manners were cold. He spoke little—never in praise—sometimes in dry and imperious tones of censure. A

glance preceded his words, and rendered them all but useless, so accurately and energetically, at times, did his small, deep-set, light-blue eye express his meaning.

Ambition and patience had enabled Karl Van Amberg to make a fortune without other assistance. His vessels ploughed every sea. Never loved—always respected—he enjoyed everywhere unlimited credit. An absolute master at home, the idea never entered any one's head to resist any expression of his will. All that came in his way yielded in silence. At this moment he was standing leaning against the mantel. His black garments were very plain, but not wanting in a certain severe elegance.

William Van Amberg, his brother, had a character in all respects opposite to that of Karl; he would have remained poor, with the modest inheritance of his ancestors, if Karl had not determined to become rich. He confided his little fortune to his brother, saying, "do for me as for yourself." Attached to the obscure spot which had given him birth, he lived quietly, smoking, smiling, and learning from time to time that some hundreds of thousands of francs had come to him. One day he was informed that he possessed a million, and he simply wrote: "Thanks, Karl, it shall be for your children."

And then he forgot that he was rich, and made no alteration in his manner of living. He pre-

served in his garments the graceless shape and the coarse material of a rustic who avoids the neighborhood of cities. A course of theology had been the only study of his youth. His father, a devout Catholic, had destined him for the service of God; but it turned out that in consequence of the indecision of his character, William did not enter into orders, did not marry, and continued to live quietly in the family of his brother. The constant reading of religious books, the only education which he had received, had given to his language a mystical form which contrasted with the rustic simplicity of his person. This was the only peculiarity of William, who possessed nothing remarkable except good sense and a great heart. He was the primitive type of his family; his brother was its ultimate manifestation, the example of the change produced by newly-acquired wealth.

Madame Van Amberg was seated near a window, working in silence. Her countenance still preserved traces of great beauty. She seemed weak and ill. A single glance sufficed to show that she could not have been born in Holland. Her black hair and slightly olive complexion indicated a southern origin. Silently submissive to her husband, the iron will of Karl Van Amberg had crushed this unresisting and delicate creature. She had never murmured; perhaps she was dying—if so, she was dying without uttering

a complaint. Her expression was wonderfully sad; she seemed to have suffered both from the evident unhappiness of her destiny, and from unknown misfortunes, the memory of which clung to her.

Christine, her third daughter, resembled her. Dark-complexioned like herself, she presented a striking contrast to the rosy faces of her sisters. Mr. Van Amberg did not love Christine. Cold and reserved even to those whom he secretly loved, his severity was cruel to those who had no part in his affection. Upon Christine he had never bestowed a single kiss. She only knew the caresses of her mother, and even these she received in secret and mingled with tears. These two unfortunates hid themselves to manifest their love to each other.

At intervals, Madame Van Amberg coughed painfully. The damp climate of Holland was slowly conducting to the tomb this woman born under the genial sky of Spain. Her large melancholy eyes were fixed mechanically upon the only horizon which for twenty years past had met their view. Fog and rain surrounded the house. She looked out, shivered as if struck by a mortal chill, and then resumed her work.

As we have already said, the clock had just struck eight, and the two young Hollanders, who notwithstanding their fortune, waited upon their father, had just placed the tea and smoked beef upon the table,

when Karl Van Amberg, turning towards his wife, said to her abruptly:—

"Madame, where is your daughter?"

It was Christine whom the uneasy glance of Madame Van Amberg had been endeavoring to discover in the garden through the fog.

She only replied to her husband's question by rising and opening the door, and leaning against the rail of the stairway which led to her daughter's room, she thrice called:—

"Christine!"

No one answering, she turned pale. She again looked out afar through the fog.

"Come in, Madame," said to her in a surly tone the old servant Gothon, squatted upon the pavement of the vestibule which she had inundated with soap and water, and which she was vigorously scrubbing. "Come in, Madame, the cold air will increase your cough, and Mademoiselle Christine is far hence. The bird flew before the break of day!"

Madame Van Amberg cast a melancholy glance from the meadow where no step was heard, to the sitting-room where her irritated husband was waiting for her; she then entered the parlor and seated herself in silence at the table around which the rest of the family had already taken their places.

No one spoke. Every eye read upon the countenance of Mr. Van Amberg that he was out of humor,

and no one attempted to change the direction of his thoughts. His wife continued to fix her attention upon the window, in the hope of discovering some indication of her daughter's return. Her lips hardly touched the milk which filled her cup, and evident suffering increased the paleness of her sweet and melancholy face.

"Annunciata, my dear, take a little tea," said her brother-in-law William, "the day will be damp and rainy. It is necessary for you to warm your chest, which seems to me seriously enough affected this morning."

Annunciata smiled sadly, and only replied by lifting to her lips the tea which was offered to her; but she had not the heart to drink it, and she replaced the cup upon the table. Mr. Van Amberg looked at nobody; he ate with his eyes fixed upon his plate.

"My sister," resumed William, "it is your duty to take care of your health; and you who fulfil all your duties, should not neglect this one."

A slight blush passed over Annunciata's brow. Her eyes met those of her husband, who had slowly turned towards her. Trembling, and ready to burst into tears, she made no further effort to take anything; and the silence was complete, as at the beginning of the breakfast.

A step was heard in the hall which led to the sit-

ting-room. Some grumbling words were spoken by the old servant which were not distinctly heard in the parlor. And then the door was opened and Christine entered.

The fog had dampened her muslin dress. The wind had disturbed some of the tresses of her hair. Her black mantle glittered with a thousand little raindrops; her color was heightened from embarrassment and fear; her empty chair was next to her mother's; she seated herself in it and held down her head. Nothing was offered to the belated child.

The silence continued.

Madame Van Amberg, impelled by maternal solicitude, took from the pocket of her dress a handkerchief with which she wiped Christine's forehead and wet hair. She then took her hands to warm them in her own.

Mr. Van Amberg, for the second time since the commencement of breakfast, looked at his wife. She immediately dropped Christine's hands, slowly replaced her handkerchief upon her knees, held down her head like her daughter, and remained motionless. Mr. Van Amberg rose from table. Tears filled the mother's eyes when she saw that her child had not eaten. She went and seated herself near the window and commenced working.

Christine remained in her seat in the same attitude

of shame and fear. The two elder daughters busied themselves in clearing the table.

"Do you not see that Wilhelmina and Maria are attending to their household duties? Cannot you do as they do?

As her father spoke, Christine rose hastily, and taking the tea-pot and the cups, ran several times, hurriedly, from the sitting-room to the pantry.

"Go more quietly, or you will break something," resumed Mr. Van Amberg, "you should begin everything at its proper time, that you may be able to finish it without hurry."

Christine stopped and remained motionless in the middle of the room. Her two sisters passed near her and smiled, and one of them said, in an under tone —for no one spoke loud in the presence of Mr. Van Amberg:

"Christine cannot learn household duties by gazing at the stars or by looking at the water flow."

"Come, Mademoiselle, you are soiling everything here," said the servant, who had just come in. "Go and change this damp dress which wets all my furniture."

Christine remained standing in the middle of the room, not daring to move without the order of the master.

"Leave the room!" said Mr. Van Amberg.

The young girl hurried out, ascended the staircase, entered her chamber, and leaning upon her bed,

burst into tears. Madame Van Amberg continued silent, with her eyes fixed upon her work.

When the cloth was removed, Wilhelmina and Maria placed upon the mahogany table a large pot of beer, glasses, long pipes, and a quantity of tobacco. They drew up two arm-chairs; Karl and William seated themselves in them.

"Ascend to your room, Madame," then said Mr. Van Amberg, in the imperious tone of voice which was usual to him when he spoke to his wife; "I wish to talk of business matters which would not interest you. Do not go any farther, however; I shall call you before long; I wish to have some conversation with you."

Annunciata bowed in sign of obedience, and left the room. Wilhelmina and Maria came up to their father. He kissed their beautiful blond curls without speaking. The two brothers lighted their pipes and remained alone together.

"Karl, my brother," then said William, placing both his arms upon the table, and looking Mr. Van Amberg in the face, "before we come to business, let me communicate to you, even should they offend you, some thoughts which weigh upon my feelings. Every one here is afraid of you, and advice, that salutary support of all men, you never get."

"Speak on, William," Mr. Van Amberg coldly answered.

"In truth, Karl, it is impossible for me not to tell you that you treat Annunciata, your wife, harshly. God commands you to protect her, and you leave her to suffer, perhaps to die under your eyes, without heeding it. The stronger should sustain the weaker. At one's own fireside, one should only have words of kindness for the stranger who comes from afar. The husband owes protection to her whom he has chosen for his wife. With all these claims upon you, brother, I must tell you that you treat Annunciata harshly."

"Does she complain?" asked Mr. Van Amberg, at the same time filling his glass with beer.

"No, brother; but it is only the strong who revolt and complain. A tree falls with a crash; a reed bends to the earth and no one hears it. No, she does not complain, unless to complain is to be silent, to be ill and to obey always and everywhere, like a machine without soul. You have taken away life from this poor woman! Some day she will cease to move and to breathe, but she has long since ceased to live!"

"Brother! there are words which should not be spoken without consideration; there are opinions which should not be entertained from fear of doing injustice."

"Am I not as familiar with your life as my own, Karl, and can I not speak of it with judgment and with knowledge?"

Mr. Van Amberg puffed out a mouthful of smoke,

threw himself back in his arm-chair, and made no reply.

"Brother, I know you as well as I know myself," William mildly resumed. "Although God did not create our two hearts on the same day, and has placed them here to love, but not resemble, one another, I understand you perfectly, brother. When the humble house of our fathers seemed to you too small, I said nothing; you were ambitious. When one is born with that good or evil fortune, one must do as do the birds who have wings to fly high; one must rise. You left—I pressed your hand, and saw you go without reproaching you; every one should be allowed to be happy according to his own manner. When you had gained a great deal of gold, and gave me more of it than it was necessary for me to have, you said: 'More;' I said: 'So be it.' It is an honest life to work and to grow rich by working; it suited you. I preferred my quiet, my home, my comfort without display—but we were both free. You returned married, brother, and I did not approve of your marriage. In the first place, it is wiser to take one's companion from the little corner of the earth where one expects to finish one's days—it is already something that both love the same places—and then, it is generous to leave to one's wife, family, friends and familiar objects to look upon. It shows great confidence in one's self to undertake alone all her happiness. Happiness

is sometimes composed of so many different elements! It is often an imperceptible atom which serves for the foundation to its great edifice. I am not fond of experiments upon the hearts of others dictated by vanity. In short, you married a foreigner, who is dying of our climate, and who, surrounded by our fogs, regrets her sunny Spain. Your mistake has been still greater —excuse me brother, but that there may never be occasion to return to this subject, I wish to speak without reserve."

"I am listening to you, William, you are my elder brother."

"Thanks for your patience, Karl. You married a very young woman, when you were no longer young yourself. Your business takes you to Spain. You meet a Spanish nobleman who is ruined, and you render him a great service. You have been always generous with your money, brother, and wealth has not taught you to close your hand to retain what it held. This man had a daughter, a child of fifteen years. She was beautiful. In spite of your apparent coldness, her beauty struck you. You asked her hand of her father. You only thought of one thing: that she was poor and you made her rich. To refuse your request would have been to show ingratitude towards a benefactor. Annunciata was given to you—you took her, brother, without examining her attentively enough to see if there was joy upon her face; without asking

this child if she followed you of her own free will; without questioning her heart. In that country the heart is early developed. Perhaps she left behind her some youthful dreams—some first affection—excuse me, brother, this is a difficult subject to touch upon."

"Leave it, William," coldly interrupted Mr. Van Amberg.

"So be it then. To proceed. You returned here, and, as your business still required you to make long journeys, you placed Annunciata under my charge. She remained many years with me in this house. Karl, the youth of this woman was a sad one; she lived without pleasure, without amusement, isolated and alone. Your two elder daughters, now the joy of our house, were then in the cradle; they had not yet learned to speak to their mother. I was a very serious companion for this young and lovely woman, and—for it is right to know oneself—nothing in me could be a resource for her. I believe myself to be an honest man, sensible, honorable, kind and simple, but I have read nothing and never indulged in day-dreams; I know but little; and I divine nothing; I am fond of my ease, my arm-chair, my old books and my pipe. I at first thought—because it was convenient for me to think so—that Annunciata resembled me, and that with a good home and quiet, she would be happy after my way; but I at last understood, at a very late period I confess, what, I fear

brother, you have never comprehended—that this woman was not made to be at the head of a Dutch household. At first, she felt sensitively the harshness of the climate; she used continually to ask me if we should never have softer summers, less severe winters, if the fogs would last so long every year. I would answer 'No—the season is a bad one;' but I did not speak the truth; all the succeeding winters were alike. She would try to sing the romances and bolleros of Seville; but her song would soon cease; and she would burst into tears. It recalled too vividly her native land. She would remain seated, motionless and sad, wishing, as I have read in my Bible, for the 'wings of the dove to fly unto the uttermost parts of the earth.' Brother, it was a sad sight. You have never known how long were the winter evenings here in this sitting-room. The day was over at four o'clock, and she used to work by a lamp until bed-time. I used to make some efforts to converse, but she was ignorant of the subjects with which I was acquainted, and I knew nothing of those with which she was familiar. At last I saw that the most agreeable thing for her was to be left to her own thoughts. She would work, or she would rest, she would weep, or she would be calm; I averted my eyes in order to give her the only boon in my power, a little liberty of thought; but it was sad enough, for her.

There was a momentary silence. Mr. Van Amberg was the first to break it, and he said in a somewhat harsh tone:

"Madame Van Amberg was at home, with her children, under the protection of a devoted friend. Her husband was absent, laboring to increase the fortune of the family; she remained in the house to attend to her domestic duties and the education of her daughters; this was all perfectly natural."

And he replenished his pipe with tobacco.

"This is all true, brother," answered William, "but it is equally true that she was unhappy. Was she wrong to be so? God will judge that! Let us leave rigorous justice to him, Karl; it is for us to have compassion. One day during your long absence, chance brought to this country some Spaniards, whom Annunciata had known in her childhood; among them was the son of an old friend of her father. Oh! how happy and at the same time overcome was the poor child at the sight of her countrymen! How many tears she shed in the midst of her joy!—for cheerfulness had become impossible to her, and she wept at every emotion. But with what enthusiasm did she speak and listen to her native language! She fancied herself once more in Spain. Those few days she was almost happy. She had regained energy and life. It is so delightful to find again a lost friend, and when one is young to

see some one who is also young! You returned; you were unkind, brother; one day, without explaining to us your motives, you abruptly closed your door upon the strangers. Tell me, why were you unwilling that fellow-countrymen, friends, a companion of childhood, should come and speak to your wife of her family? Why did you require a complete separation from, and total rupture with her friends of old? She obeyed you without murmuring, but, believe me, Karl, she suffered more than you suspect. I, her old friend, have watched her closely. Since this new proof of your severity, she has become even more melancholy than before. It was in vain that she became a mother for a third time; she continued unhappy. Brother, your hand has weighed too heavily upon this delicate creature!"

Mr. Van Amberg had arisen from his chair, and was walking slowly up and down the room.

"Have you done, William? This conversation is painful,—let us put an end to it, brother! Do not abuse the right which I accord to you of speaking to me freely!"

"No, I have not yet finished what I have to say to you. Listen to me, as if our father spoke to you. He was only a peasant, Karl; but with his honest heart he might well have given advice to us with our science and our fine manners. You are a cold and severe husband; this is not all: you are an un-

just father! Christine, your third daughter, has not that share of your affections which you owe to your children; and by this unequal distribution of your paternal love, you inflict a new grief upon the heart of Annunciata. This child resembles her; she is what I suppose your wife to have been at fifteen years of age, a lively and charming Spanish girl; she has all her mother's tastes; she too exists with difficulty in our climate, and although born here, by some freak of nature, she suffers from it as much as Annunciata suffered. Brother, this child is not easy to bring up: she is independent, impassioned, violent in all her impressions; she requires movement and liberty not at all consistent with the regular habits of our household, but she has a good heart, and perhaps by appealing to it you might have tamed her wild nature. For Christine, you are only a merciless judge. Her childhood was only one long grief. And thus, far from becoming less restless, she loves more than ever the open air and freedom; she goes out as soon as it is daylight; she considers the house as a cage, whose iron bars hurt her, and your efforts to keep her in are powerless. Brother, love your child a little that she may obey you. Affection is the strongest power that you can employ, the one that always succeeds when all others fail. Why do you prevent this young girl, who is so eager to live, from marrying the man whom she loves?

Herbert the student, formerly a subordinate in your counting-house, is not rich, and there is nothing brilliant in the match; but these children love one another!"

Mr. Van Amberg, who had continued to walk up and down the room, now stopped and answered coldly:

"Christine is only fifteen, and I fulfil a duty in imposing a check upon the insane passions which are prematurely disturbing her reason. As for what you call my inequalities of affection, you have yourself taken care to show a motive for them in the defects of her character. Brother, you who reproach others with being merciless judges, should have a care lest you are yourself too severe a judge. Every one acts according to the light within, and all our thoughts are not proper to be spoken. Empty your glass, William; and when you have smoked out your pipe, do not re-fill it. I shall not speak to you to-day of our business; it is late and I am tired. It is not always well to bring up the recollections of the past. We should leave them to slumber undisturbed. I wish to be alone a few moments—leave me, and tell Madame Van Amberg to come down to speak with me in a quarter of an hour."

"Why do you not say: 'tell Annunciata?' Why is this pretty and odd name so seldom in your mouth, brother?"

"Tell Madame Van Amberg that I wish to speak with her, and leave me, brother," sternly replied Mr. Van Amberg, much agitated.

William fearing that he had reached the limits of what it was possible to say to Karl Van Amberg, rose and left the room. At the foot of the little wooden staircase which led to the chambers above, he hesitated some moments as to what way he should take; he then determined to ascend, and, in order to find Annunciata, he directed his steps towards Christine's room. It was a small place, very narrow, extremely clean, with some flowers in glasses, some rosaries hanging on a wooden crucifix, and a bed as white as snow; a guitar (her mother's) was suspended upon the wall. The window, from this height, overlooked the meadow, the river, and the willows. Christine was seated upon the foot of her bed; she was still weeping; her mother stood near her, offering to her a little milk and bread upon which Christine's tears were flowing. Annunciata kissed her daughter's eyes, and then furtively wiped her own.

William entered; he stopped some minutes at the threshold, contemplating with emotion the picture before his eyes.

These two women, the one already beautiful—the other still so—both so similar in countenance that one seemed the past, the youth of the other—the one weeping as he had seen the other weep—the daughter

who seemed to recommence the griefs of the mother, and he a witness of the tears, but not a confidant of their cause—all this affected his feelings powerfully, and he in vain sought for some remedy for so many ills.

"Oh!" exclaimed William, raising his hand to his eyes, "if I had married, I should have wished to be surrounded with happy faces; I should have wished to see my wife happy, and decked with a golden diadem and pearls on her brow, start for the kermesses; I should have wished to hear my daughter sing the whole day long; I should have wished my house to be the abode of joy and laughter. But take courage, my poor dear children; I have just been working for you—I have spoken at length on your behalf to my brother; I obtained no answer, but a good word which reaches the heart germinates there like the seed in the earth. To-morrow will be perhaps better than to-day—we should learn to await our destiny."

"My brother, my good brother, speak to my child!" answered Annunciata; "she no longer prays, nor obeys; her heart revolts, and her tears will bear no fruit, for she threatens and murmurs. Ask her, brother, from whom she has heard that life is happiness; that we only live to be happy? Teach her her duty, and give her the strength to perform it."

"Your husband has asked for you, sister; I will remain with Christine and speak with her."

"I go, brother," answered Annunciata.

And she approached the mantel-glass, moistened her eyes to remove the traces of tears, placed her hand upon her heart to stop its throbbings, and when her countenance was only expressive of calm and silence, she slowly descended the stairs.

Her servant Gothon was seated on the steps.

"You spoil her, Madame!" she abruptly said to her mistress; "foolish ears have need to hear sharp words; you spoil her!"

Gothon was an inmate of the house before Annunciata, and she had viewed with great displeasure the stranger brought home by her master. She never recognised her authority, but, as she had been in the service of the mother of the Van Ambergs, it was without any apprehension of being discharged, that she vented her ill humor upon her gentle mistress.

Annunciata entered the sitting-room where her husband was walking slowly up and down. She remained standing near the door, as if awaiting his orders. The expression of Mr. Van Amberg's face was more serious and gloomy than ever. He stopped short before his wife.

"Are you sure that no one can hear me, Madame? Are we certainly alone?"

"We are alone, sir," answered Annunciata in surprise.

Mr. Van Amberg resumed his walking, and for some moments made no further remark. His wife, with her hand resting upon the back of an arm-chair, waited in silence for him to speak; at length he stopped in front of her and said:

"You are bringing up your daughter Christine badly; I resigned to you the government of this child; you do not sufficiently watch her. Do you know where she is in the habit of going? Do you know what she is in the habit of doing?"

"From her childhood up, sir," mildly answered Annunciata, pausing between almost every word, "Christine has been fond of living in the open air, of running in the garden; she is delicate, she has need of sunshine and exercise to strengthen her. Up to the present time you have found no objection to her living in this way—and I have thought that I could, without injury to herself, allow this child to follow the natural bent of her character; if you think otherwise, she will obey, sir."

"You bring up your daughter badly," coldly repeated Mr. Van Amberg; "she will dishonor the name which she bears."

"Sir!" exclaimed Annunciata, whilst a crimson flush overspread her cheeks, and her eyes flashed for a moment like lightning.

"Mark well what I say, Madame; I wish my name to be respected as you well know. I am informed of everything that takes place here, as you also know. Your daughter leaves the house clandestinely to meet a man to whom I have refused her hand; this morning at six o'clock they were together at the end of the meadow."

"My daughter, my daughter!" Annunciata exclaimed in disconsolate tones. "Oh! it is impossible! No, no, she is innocent; she shall continue innocent—I will place myself between the evil and her—I will save my child! I will take her in my arms—I will place my hands upon her ears, that dangerous words may not reach her, and I will say to her: 'My daughter, remain innocent, remain respected, if you would not have me die!'"

Mr. Van Amberg witnessed unmoved this burst of maternal grief. Before his cold eye Annunciata felt confused at her own emotion—she endeavored to compose herself, and then, with clasped hands, with stifled breast, and her eyes filled with tears which she would not allow to flow, she resumed in a constrained voice:

"Is what you say true, beyond the possibility of doubt, sir?"

"It is true," answered Mr. Van Amberg; "I never make an accusation until I am certain."

A moment of silence succeeded.

Mr. Van Amberg resumed:

"You will lock Christine in her room, and will bring the key to me here. She will remain there some time; I wish that useful reflections should occur to her. She will lose in a prolonged seclusion that love of movement and of liberty which is leading her astray; in the silence of perfect solitude, the tumult of her thoughts will be calmed. No one will enter the room. Gothon alone will take necessary food to her; she will come to me for the key. This is what I have decided upon as proper."

Madame Van Amberg remained standing in the same place; several times her lips opened to speak, but her courage failed her; at last she came forward a few steps.

"And I, sir, I at least will see my child!"

"I said nobody," answered Mr. Van Amberg.

"But she will yield to despair, if no one sustain her! I will speak to her with severity; you can rely upon my doing so! Only let me see her once a day. She may fall ill from grief—and if she does, who will know it? Gothon does not love her. In pity, let me see Christine! I will only remain one minute, a single minute!"

Mr. Van Amberg stopped, and fixed upon his wife a look which made her draw back.

"Do not compel me to add one word more," he said; "I do not wish to say anything more upon the

subject; do not attempt to discuss with me, Madame; no one shall enter Christine's room; do you understand me?"

"I will obey," answered Annunciata.

"Go up stairs and explain my orders to your daughter; this afternoon at dinner you will bring me the key of her room; go!"

It was some minutes before Madame Van Amberg felt sufficient strength to dare to take a step: she was afraid that she would fall at her husband's feet. Finally, supporting herself by leaning upon the different articles of furniture which she found upon her way, she left the room. As she was ascending the stairs, Wilhelmina and Maria were coming down, singing. At the sight of their mother they became silent, and seeing the traces of a profound grief of the cause of which they were ignorant, they remained motionless like two frightened birds. Annunciata called them to her, pressed her daughters to her heart, and allowed her tears to fall upon the two blond heads which she held in her embrace.

"Be happy, my daughters," she said, "be always happy; may God permit you for a long time to laugh and sing!"

And then, leaving them with a forced smile, she ascended to Christine's room.

Wilhelmina and Maria entered the sitting room deeply moved; they drew near their father; he was

standing against the fire-place with his face covered with one of his hands. He neither heard nor saw them. The children remained in silence by his side. After some minutes of profound reflection, Mr. Van Amberg raised his head, and passing his arm around Maria's waist, kissed her forehead. His lips touched her hair, still moist with Annunciata's tears; he drew back, and questioned his daughter with his eye.

"My mother has just kissed us," she answered.

Madame Van Amberg had gone to Christine; she had found her alone, seated on the foot of her bed and exhausted by long weeping. Her pretty face sometimes so full of energy, then wore an expression of profound dejection which it was impossible to see without emotion. Her long hair fell in disorder on her shoulders; her figure was weighed down with grief; a rosary had fallen from her partly open hand; she had tried to obey her mother and pray, but she had only wept. Her black mantle, still wet with the rain, was lying on a table; some little twigs of willow were half concealed in the folds of the silk. Christine eyed them with love and sadness; it seemed to her a century since she had seen the sun rise over the river, the old trees and Herbert's boat. Her mother slowly approached her. She stood before her daughter and said:

"My child, where were you this morning before the break of day?"

Christine raised her eyes to her mother's face, but did not answer.

"My child," repeated Annunciata, "where were you this morning before the break of day?"

Christine arose from the bed, and throwing herself upon her knees near her mother, said:

"I was seated upon the trunk of one of the willows which project over the river. I was near Herbert's boat."

"Christine!" exclaimed Madame Van Amberg, "this is true then!—O, my child, can you have so far disobeyed the orders which were given you? Can you have thus forgotten my lessons, my advice? You were not thinking of me when you were guilty of this culpable act!"

"Herbert said to me; 'Come, you shall be my wife, I will always love you, you will be free, and happy; everything is prepared for our marriage and our flight, Come.' I answered: 'I will not leave my mother.' Mother, you it was that saved me; if it would have been a crime to follow Herbert, the thought of you alone prevented me from committing it. I would not leave my mother!"

A flash of joy lit up Annunciata's face. "I thank thee, God!" she muttered; she stretched out her hand to her kneeling child and raising her, made her sit upon a chair; and then placing herself by her side, she said:

"Speak to me, Christine, open your heart to me, tell me all your thoughts. Let us regret together your faults; let us endeavor together to hope for the future. Come, my daughter, hide nothing from me, speak."

Christine leaned her head upon her mother's shoulder, placed one of her little hands in her's, and sighed deeply, as if her heart were too oppressed to speak; and then languidly and with effort, said:

"I have nothing, mother, to confess, with which you are not already acquainted. I love Herbert. You who have followed my life step by step, you know that I must love Herbert. His was the first heart which I found open to me. Recollect, mother, the existence which you have made for me here. When I was a child I said to my sisters: 'Come with me and run in the meadow, come and look for the birds'-nests, let us go and play and sing together!' My sisters answered: 'go alone,' and they remained seated upon the threshold, turning the spinning-wheel. I did not play long; nothing on the earth pleased me; I looked at the sky, and it appeared to me very beautiful, especially when covered with all its stars: a calming influence seemed to come down from them to me. I fancied that the star-covered sky had a voice so low that it was necessary to remain silent and motionless to hear it. I came to you, mother, as before I had been to my sisters; I said to you: 'Mother, let us together look at the sky; are those

stars worlds, whose inhabitants are as unhappy as we? or are they heavens where tired souls will find repose?' And you answered: 'Christine, avoid these thoughts; turn the spinning-wheel as your sisters do.' One voice alone on earth said to me: 'I will go where you go, I will dream as you dream; like you I think, that there is not love enough on earth, and I choose you, Christine, to love you!' This voice, mother, was Herbert's. Herbert is only a poor student placed in my father's charge; but he possesses a noble heart, somewhat sad like my own. He is learned, and he is gentle with those who are ignorant. He is poor, and he has the pride of a king. He loves, and he only speaks of it to her who knows it. Mother, I love Herbert—Herbert came honorably to ask my hand of my father, who only answered him with a disdainful smile. Since then, Herbert has been forbidden the house, and I have been compelled to try to live without him. I have not succeeded. I have made many *neuvaines* upon the rosary which you gave me. I have seen you pray while you wept, mother, and I said to myself: 'I weep as she does, I must pray as she does;' but it happened that at the first break of day, I once saw from afar a little boat descend the river, and then return and again descend; from time to time a white sail fluttered in the air as we wave a handkerchief as a farewell signal to those who are leaving us. I

was always thinking of Herbert; it was therefore natural for me to think of him when I saw the boat; I ran across the meadow; I reached the water's edge, mother: it was he! he was expecting me! he was waiting for me! We talked sadly upon the pain of separation. I could only see him from a distance—his boat was rocking far below my feet. We conversed much in this way, losing some of our words in the noise of the wind in the trees; but enough remained to assure us that we should continue to love one another as long as we lived. This morning, Herbert, discouraged in waiting for a change in our situation, wished me to flee with him; I might have done so, but I remained for you, mother—Now you know all—and if I am guilty, forgive me."

Madame Van Amberg had been very much moved while listening to her daughter's tale. With her brow supported by her hand, and her head bowed upon her breast, she had concealed from Christine the suffering which she endured; she was fearful of checking by a word or gesture the confession which was escaping in confidence from her child's lips.

When all was told, Annuciata remained profoundly absorbed in her own reflections; she felt that Christine's suffering heart had need of gentle lessons and affectionate advice, and she was the bearer to her of a severe sentence which could not fail to aggravate the evil; she felt that she was condemned to withhold

from her sick child the remedies that might have saved her. At last gazing at her daughter with an expression of profound melancholy, and rather answering her own thoughts than addressing her who was listening to her, she said:

"You love him, then, very dearly?"

"O mother! exclaimed Christine, I love him with all my soul! I wait for him, I see him, and then I think of him! this constitutes all my life! It seems to me that I can never make it understood how entirely my heart belongs to him. I often dream of dying for him, not for the purpose of saving his life —that would be too much a matter of course, and too easy—but of dying uselessly, in obedience to a command from him."

"Hush! child, hush! you alarm me!" exclaimed Annunciata, placing both her hands on her daughter's mouth.

Christine suddenly disengaged herself from her mother's arms.

"Ah! you do not know," she said, "what it is to love as I do! My father can never have permitted himself to be loved thus!"

"Hush! my child, hush!" Annunciata repeated with energy. "Oh, my daughter! how shall I instil into your heart thoughts of peace and duty! Almighty Father! bless my words that they may reach her soul! Christine, listen to me."

Annunciata took both her daughter's hands, and made her stand before her.

"My child, you know nothing of life, you walk at random, you will assuredly lose the right path. As you experience it, our hearts are full of overwhelming dreams, of boundless thoughts; but, Christine, it is these very hearts that we should restore to our Father in Heaven unimpaired by aught on earth; it is our immortal souls which stifle in this transitory world, and which struggle to attain their final goal, the eternal love of God. All young hearts, my daughter, have been troubled as yours is now. The noble ones have come out of the combat triumphant; the others have fallen. My child! life is not easy; it has its trials, its painful struggles; believe me, for us women there is no true happiness without the bounds of duty. When we have made a shipwreck of our happiness, there still remain great things in life. There is dignity in duty as well as elevation in love. Honor, the esteem of others, are not words devoid of meaning. Listen to me, my beloved child: are you not fearful of offending that God whom I have taught you to love since an infant? Seek Him, and you will find better consolation than it is in my power to give. Christine, we love in God those from whom we are severed on earth. He, who in his infinite wisdom has imposed so many fetters on the heart of woman, foresaw the sacrifices they

would entail, and most surely he has kept treasures of love for hearts which break in obedience to duty."

Annunciata hastily wiped away the tears that were falling over her sweet face; and then clasping Christine's arm, exclaimed:

"Upon your knees, my child! on our knees before the Christ which I gave you! The day is far gone, and yet we discern him; his arms seem to open to us. Lord, bless my child! save my child! console my child! Lord! soften her heart, and make her humble and submissive."

Annunciata arose, and taking Christine in her arms, who had passively allowed herself to be placed upon her knees and lifted up again, she kissed her affectionately, bathed her hair with tears, and pressed her a thousand times to her heart.

"My child," she murmured between her kisses, "my child, speak to me, speak one word which I may take away with me as a hope! My daughter, have you nothing to say to me?"

"Mother, I love Herbert," answered Christine.

Annunciata looked despairingly at her daughter, the crucifix hanging upon the wall, the sky which was partly visible through the open window, and allowing herself to sink into a chair, remained motionless and discouraged.

The dinner bell rang. Madame Van Amberg rose

suddenly, and collecting her thoughts with a great effort, said in a stifled voice:

"Mr. Van Amberg orders you to be locked in your room. I am to take him the key. You are to see no one. The hour has come, and he is waiting for me."

"Locked in!" exclaimed Christine; "locked in! Alone all day! I will sooner dash my brains out against the wall."

"He will have it so—I must obey—he will have it so," Annunciata mournfully repeated.

She approached the door, and cast upon Christine a look so full of love and grief that the child, fascinated by the gaze, let her depart without opposition. The key turned in the lock, and Annunciata, supporting herself by the banister, slowly descended.

She entered the sitting-room, where Mr. Van Amberg was alone.

"You remained up there a long time," he said. "Are you now perfectly convinced that your daughter has been this morning with Herbert, the student?"

"She has," murmured Annunciata.

"You have communicated to her my orders?"

"I have."

"You have locked her in her room?"

"I have done so."

"Where is the key?"

"Here it is."

"And now, to dinner," added Mr. Van Amberg, walking towards the dining room.

He entered first—Annunciata tried to follow him—her strength failed her, and she sank into an arm-chair which stood near her.

Mr. Van Amberg seated himself alone at table.

"A prisoner!" exclaimed Christine, "separated from the rest of the family! shut up! Oh! the meadow was too wide for me, the house too large; I must have a narrower prison, with more visible walls. A prisoner! they have taken from me the little air that I was accustomed to breathe, the little liberty that I found means to enjoy."

She opened the window to its full extent, leaned upon the balustrade, and gazed at the sky. It was very dark; night had completely set in; heavy clouds concealed all the stars; no light descended from above upon the earth; different shades of obscurity alone marked out the outlines of surrounding objects so familiar to Christine. The willows, so beautiful when sunshine and Herbert were there, no longer appeared to the sight but as a black and motionless mass; a profound silence reigned everywhere; to hope for happiness was impossible in the view of nature thus deprived of life and light. Christine had a fever; she felt overwhelmed by a

thousand different influences, by the indifference of friends, by the will of a tyrant, even by the night which was cold and melancholy like all that surrounded her. The young girl's heart throbbed violently and rebelliously. She wished to brave her imprisonment—she walked and struck herself against the wall. She wished to brave the darkness—she wished to see, and her eyes became fatigued by being concentrated upon invisible things. She wished to brave indifference—she loved—loved ardently in presence of these cold hearts, and proclaimed her love with pride and happiness; but there was no one there to hear her, and the night wind bore afar from all human ear the words of love which escaped from her lips.

"Be it so!" said Christine; "let them have their will! let them make me wretched! I shall not complain. By persecution they sanctify my love: if I had only been happy, I might perhaps have been ashamed of loving so much; but they deprive me of air and of liberty—I suffer—I weep. Ah! I feel proud that my heart throbs with joy in the midst of so many evils. Whatever forces our tears to flow is respected. My sufferings will ennoble my love and compel for it the respect of those who ridiculed it. Herbert, dear Herbert, what occupies you at this moment? Are you joyfully thinking of to-morrow's dawn? Are you examining your sail to see that

nothing shall prevent it from resisting the wind and flying rapidly to its haven? or are you sleeping and dreaming of the old willows of the meadow, of the murmur of the water in their branches, and of the voice of Christine saying: 'I will return!' Oh! no, Herbert, it cannot be so; we could not be so united as we are, and still experience such opposite impressions at the same moment. You are sad, dearest, and you know not why; I am sad in the knowledge of our unhappiness—this is all the difference between us that separation can have produced. When shall I see you once more, Herbert? Alas, I cannot say—but we shall assuredly meet again. If God lets me live, he will let me love you."

Christine closed the window and threw herself, dressed as she was, upon her bed; a chill crept over her, and taking her black mantle, she wrapped it round her, and her head soon sank quietly upon her breast. Her hands, which at first held the mantle folded over her, gradually relaxed their hold and fell by her sides; she slept in the midst of her tears.

The first rays of the rising sun, feeble and dim though they were, awoke Christine, who sprang hastily from her couch.

"Herbert is waiting for me!" she exclaimed.

At her age, we more easily recollect happiness than tears. The dawn of the day was again for her a rendezvous of love; but she had hardly taken a

step when the consciousness of her situation returned, and her eyes fell upon the closed door. She went to the window, leaned out as on the previous evening, and looked mournfully around. One corner of the sky seemed to cover a focus of light which struggled indistinctly through billows of clouds. The pale foliage of the trees shivered in the breeze, which was only strong enough to ruffle the leaves without bending the branches; the long, thin grass of the meadow was only seen through a veil of fog which the sun had not yet dispelled. The sounds of awakening nature had not yet commenced. Soon, a white sail skimmed the surface of the river; it filled, and glided on as light as the open wing of a beautiful bird. It passed and repassed in front of the meadow; it was lowered before the trees, and then again was spread anew, bending the boat's gunwale to the water's edge, tacking a thousand times within a limited space, as though confined by a magic influence to one point of the shore. Sometimes, at distant intervals, the wind brought to the ear faint and hardly perceptible sounds, like the last notes of a song, and then the little boat would recommence its manœuvres, and its sail would flap in the air. The white tints of dawn gave way to the warmer light of the sun; the sand and the water began to assume colors; passengers appeared on the shore; a few trading boats were seen ascending the river; all the

windows of the little red house were opened, as if to admit the morning air. The boat dropped its sail, and gradually disappeared, floating down with the current.

Christine looked after it and wept.

Twice during the day, Gothon opened the door of the young girl's room and brought in her frugal repast. Twice Gothon withdrew without speaking a single word; the whole day passed in silence and solitude.

Christine knew not how to while away the weary hours: she fell upon her knees before her crucifix, holding in her hand her alabaster rosary, and with her head raised towards the cross, prayed—prayed for Herbert, and that she might see him again; the idea never occurred to her to pray that she might forget him: then she took down the guitar from the wall and passed round her neck the blue ribbon, very faded now, which had been attached to it at Seville, and which her mother had never permitted to be replaced; she attempted some strains of the songs which she loved, but her voice was choked and her tears fell faster when she tried to sing. She collected together the bits of willow and placed them between the leaves of a book to dry; but the day was very long, and the poor child fluttered in her prison like a caged bird, with an anguish which every moment increased. Her head was on fire, she

was almost stifled by the absence of air. The evening came at last. Seated by the open window, the coolness calmed her a little: but no lights were brought to her, and the hours passed more slowly than ever.

Whilst Christine was pondering over her unhappy fate, Wilhelmina came accidentally, seated herself upon the threshold of the door, and accompanied her spinning with a song which she sang in a low and melancholy tone. Christine, delighted to hear a voice near her, leaned out of the window.

"Sister," she said, "sing a little louder that I may have the consolation of hearing you! I am imprisoned —I have been a long time alone; I have no light to work by; sing, good sister, that I may listen to you!"

"I am sorry for you, Christine," answered Wilhelmina. "I do not think that my father will object to my singing in the garden; I shall be happy to have it in my power to amuse you a few minutes."

Wilhelmina then sang an old Dutch ballad, a legend insignificant enough, but which has been a thousand times repeated in all the languages of the world; but the young girl's voice was fresh and clear; the words were touching, the evening was lovely, and Christine listened.

"Have you heard me, sister?" asked Wilhelmina when she had finished, raising her head towards Christine.

"Yes, Wilhelmina, your voice is sweet and the air is sad; it has done me good to listen to you. Tell me, Wilhelmina, have you been walking this morning? Did you go far?"

"I have been to the farm with our father."

"Oh, how happy you are, sister, to have walked in the fields! How I envy that peasant, mounted on his horse! I envy that little bird that flies from branch to branch seeking the tree upon which to repose this night; I envy that fly that hums and flies where he lists; I envy everything that is free, sister!"

"Can I do nothing for you, Christine? I regret that I laughed this morning at your tears, and I shall be very happy if I have any means in my power to soften your captivity."

"May God bless you for your good heart, dear Wilhelmina. Yes, indeed, you can procure me a joy without incurring any risk to yourself. When, in your walks you pass the end of the meadow, near the water, pluck some of the little flowers which grow there, make up a bouquet for me and throw it through the window. It is a good act to give flowers to a prisoner. A good angel will direct your hand, and guide the flowers to my feet."

"Farewell, Christine. They are lighting the lamp in the parlor; my father is there, I must go in. Be patient and gentle, and have courage, sister."

"Good night, Wilhelmina; I thank you for having spoken to me. Kiss our mother once more than usual; she will understand that this kiss comes from me."

Christine went to bed; but deprived of her accustomed exercise, and tormented by a thousand anxieties, the poor young girl could not sleep; she got up, walked about in the darkness, went to bed again, but sleep came not for a single moment to bring forgetfulness of her sufferings; her eyes red with weeping and weariness, beheld the sun rise this time without illusion. She did not forget for a moment that she was a prisoner; she watched sadly the little white sail, which, faithful to the rendezvous, appeared at the horizon every morning as regularly as the sun.

The whole long day she waited for Wilhelmina; she expected the bouquet, but Gothon alone came to break upon the monotony of the hours. Perhaps her innocent interview with her sister had been discovered,—perhaps Wilhelmina had been forbidden to return. Alternately excited and desponding, Christine walked about, sat down, wept, complained of her lot, and prayed. At last evening came, but brought no return of Wilhelmina's sweet songs. Nothing interrupted the silence; all the lights of the house went out one after the other. Night and the most profound darkness reigned everywhere. Christine remained at the window, leaning out and insensible to the cold. She did as the birds do who beat

themselves against the bars of their cage without hope of escape—she leaned out until she was in danger of falling. The open air possessed a magnetic attraction for her excited head; it required a great effort of reason to prevent her from letting herself fall upon the wet grass below, which her feet had so often trodden. Suddenly Christine started; she thought that she heard her own name murmured in an under-tone at the foot of the wall. She listened.

"Christine, my daughter!" repeated the same voice.

"Oh! it is you, mother! you, out in this dreadful weather! I beseech you, go in."

"I have passed the last two days in bed, my child; I have been a little unwell; this evening I felt better; especially I felt that it was impossible for me to remain longer without seeing you, for you are my life, my strength, my health! Oh! you were right, my child, not to leave me; it would have killed me! How are you, my Christine? Do they give you all that you require? How do you live deprived of my kisses and affection?"

"Dearest mother, for heaven's sake go in! the night is damp and chilly; it will be your death!"

"One word from you warms me; my life consists in listening to you, my child. It is when away from you that I feel cold and faint. My daughter, my heart sends you a thousand kisses."

"Mother, I receive them upon my knees, with arms outstretched towards you. When shall I see you again, mother!"

"When your heart becomes submissive; when you determine to obey, when you will no longer attempt to meet him whom it is forbidden you to see. My child, it is your duty to act thus."

"Oh, what is to become of me? Never, never can I promise to love him no more. Never, when it is in my power to see him, will I deprive myself of the happiness of going to live a moment by his side. Mother, forgive me for all the tears I am the cause of your shedding!"

"I forgive you, my child, I forgive you. I am insensible to my own suffering—it is your grief to which I cannot resign myself. My daughter, call to your assistance both courage and reason, and try to obey."

"Oh! mother, I supposed that your heart might comprehend what it had never experienced! I supposed that you respected the true feelings of the heart, and that your tongue never could pronounce the word forget; but if I could forget, I should only have been, I should only be a silly child, capricious and undisciplined, unworthy of your affection. If my malady is without remedy, I am a noble woman who suffers, who sacrifices herself. How can you fail to understand that?"

"I understand it," murmured Annunciata, but in so low a tone that she felt assured that her daughter could not hear.

"Cease then, mother, to expect the end of what will only end with my life. I can pluck nothing from my heart."

And Christine, in a revery, leaning upon the wet balustrade, looked up at the black sky, whence a fine, unbroken volume of rain was slanting upon the earth.

"Are there, then, no examples of those who have loved until they died of the excess of their love? Are there, then, no examples of eyes which have remained fixed upon the beloved object upon which they opened until they closed forever? Are there, then, no examples of hearts which have retained an affection so strong that all the things of earth have broken in vain against it? I know nothing of life, but I listen and a voice within says: 'You can never cease to love!'

"Mother, go to my father; summon up a courage which you do not possess for what is personal to yourself; speak to him boldly; tell him what I tell you, demand of him my liberty, demand my happiness!"

"I! my daughter, I!" exclaimed Annunciata in terror, "I! brave Mr. Van Amberg! I oppose his will!"

"Not oppose, but supplicate—compel his heart to understand what mine experiences; force him to see and hear! Who can do it, if not you? I am a captive; my sisters are ignorant of love, my uncle William has never felt it. It needs a woman's voice to properly express a woman's feelings."

"O my child, my daughter! you do not know what you ask of me! The effort is above my strength."

"I ask of my mother a proof of her love, and I know that she will grant it to me."

"Yes, but perhaps at the expense of my life! Mr. Van Amberg may kill me with his words!"

Christine shuddered.

"Then, mother, do not go to him. Forgive me; I was only thinking of myself. If my father has so horrible a power over you, avoid his anger. Let us wait, and only pray to God."

There was a momentary pause.

"My daughter," resumed Madame Van Amberg, "since your only hope and trust is in me, and since you have called me to your assistance, I will go and speak to him. The fate of all of us is in the hands of Providence."

At this moment, Annunciata uttered a cry of terror: a hand had rudely seized her arm, and Mr. Van Amberg, without speaking a word, dragged his wife towards the door of the house, compelled her to

enter, withdrew the key from the lock, and opening the door of the sitting-room, made Madame Van Amberg pass in before him.

A lamp was still burning; but the oil was nearly exhausted, and the light was uncertain—at one moment brilliant, and at the next all but extinguished. The corners of the room were in darkness—the doors and the windows were shut—profound silence reigned; the lamp shone full upon the face of Mr. Van Amberg. He was calm, cold, unmoved. His elevated stature, the searching expression of his light blue eyes, and the austere regularity of his features, combined to give him the aspect of an implacable judge.

"You were desiring to speak to me, Madame," he said to Annunciata. "I am here—speak."

Annunciata, on entering the room, had sunk into a chair. Her garments streamed with water; her hair, heavy with rain, fell upon her shoulders; her extreme paleness gave her rather the appearance of an apparition than of a living being. Terror had deprived her of recollection; her thoughts were confused; she only felt that she suffered horribly.

The voice of Mr. Van Amberg made her tremble; the words which he spoke restored the chain of her thoughts; this weak woman thought of her child, made a violent effort, collected all her strength, and rising, murmured:—

"Now then, if it must be so!"

Mr. Van Amberg waited in silence; with his arms crossed upon his breast, and his eyes fixed upon his wife, he waited like a statue, aiding neither with gesture nor word the poor creature who stood trembling before him.

Annunciata raised her eyes bathed with tears to his face. Before speaking, she looked at him for a long time; she thought that her tears would call up tears in those eyes fixed upon her; she thought that thus alone with him, the sight of so much suffering would recall to Mr. Van Amberg that he had once loved her. She looked at him, therefore, for a long time, throwing her whole soul into the expression of her eyes; but not a muscle of her husband's countenance moved; he waited for her to speak.

"I have need of your indulgence," murmured Annunciata; "it requires a terrible effort for me to speak to you—usually, I only answer; I am afraid to speak the first. I dread your anger; have some compassion for a woman who hesitates, who trembles, who would wish to be silent, but who feels that it is her duty to speak. Christine!—the future of Christine is in your hands. This unfortunate child has begged me to attempt to soften your severity. Had I refused, there had not been on the earth a living being to ask mercy for her. This is why I venture to mention her, Sir."

There was a brief pause. Madame Van Amberg wiped away with her trembling hand the tears from her cheeks, and resumed with more courage:

"This child is greatly to be pitied; she has inherited the faults which you blame in me; she resembles me fatally. Believe me, Sir, I have labored hard to stifle the germs of this unhappy organization; I have struggled—exhorted—punished—I have spared neither my advice nor my prayers: all has been in vain. God has willed that I should suffer this grief! What I have been unable to effect in a child of a few years, I can still less accomplish with a young girl; her nature cannot change; she is to blame—but at the same time, she is greatly to be pitied! Sir, Christine loves with all her strength, with all her soul. One may die of such a love, and—and—if one does not die, one suffers frightfully!—Sir, in pity, permit her to marry him whom she loves."

Annunciata hid her face in her hands, and waited in agony for her husband to speak. Mr. Van Amberg replied:—

"Your daughter is yet but a child; she has inherited, as you say, a character which requires restraint. I am unwilling to yield to the first caprice which traverses her silly head. Herbert is only two and twenty; we know nothing of his character. Your daughter requires a protector—an enlightened guide;

besides, Herbert is without name, fortune or position —never shall Herbert, the student, marry a woman who bears the name of Mademoiselle Van Amberg."

"Sir! Sir!" resumed Annunciata with clasped hands, and almost breathless with emotion, "What best guides a woman through life is to be united to the man whom she loves! This is her best safeguard; it is this which gives her strength against all the events of the future. I beseech you, Karl! exclaimed Madame Van Amberg falling upon her knees, render life easy to my daughter! Do not make duty difficult for her; do not require too much courage of her! We are but weak creatures—we have need of both love and virtue! Place her not in the horrible necessity of choosing between them! —Oh! have pity upon her, have pity upon her!"

"Madame," exclaimed Mr. Van Amberg, and this time a slight nervous trembling agitated his frame, "Madame, your boldness is great to speak to me thus. You, you! to dare hold such language to me! —No more of this! teach your daughter not to hesitate in her choice between right and wrong. Do this, and do not weep uselessly at my feet."

"Yes it is bold, Sir, to speak thus to you. Whence do I derive the courage to do so, except from my grief? I suffer—I am ill—my life is worthless, except as a sacrifice—let my child take it—I will speak for her. She is a poor creature, whose existence you

hold in your hands. Do not crush her by the inflexibility of your will. He who is both judge and absolute master, should be guarded in all his words and all his actions; an account of them will be demanded from him. Be merciful, and spare this child!"

Mr. Van Amberg advanced towards his wife, seized her arm with one hand, and placing the other upon her mouth, said:

"Silence!—I command you. No such scenes in my house—no noise—no weeping. Your children are a few steps from you—do not disturb their sleep. Your servants are above—do not awaken them. Silence! let everything return to its accustomed order. You were wrong to speak; I was wrong to listen to you. Never venture again to discuss with me the orders which I think proper to give; it is I whom your children should obey—I whom you should obey, yourself. Go to your chamber, and let me find you to-morrow what you were yesterday."

Mr. Van Amberg had regained his usual calmness. He walked slowly from the room.

"Oh! my daughter!" exclaimed Annunciata in despair—I have failed, then, in doing anything for you! Merciful father, what will become of me? What shall I do between her and him, both inflexible!"

The lamp which had until then feebly illuminated this scene of sorrow, suddenly went out; profound

darkness prevailed; the rain beat against the windows; the wind howled; the clock of the little red house struck four. Madame Van Amberg went to one of the windows and opened it; forgetful of her own safety, she eagerly sought the damp air. She looked, through the partial obscurity of the hours which precede daylight, at those spots upon which her eyes had so often rested. Her youth, her maturity, all her life had been passed there, by that meadow and that river, and under that cloudy sky which had given her so little warmth and light. She looked out more broken-hearted than ever; it appeared to her that she had a presentiment of her approaching end, and she yielded herself up to that melancholy state of feeling which possesses us when we are looking at surrounding objects for the last time. She asked of inanimate nature the pity which man refused. She confided silently to that spot of earth and to that monotonous horizon the child whose birth they had witnessed. She showed them her tears, her maternal love, and her fears. She asked all that she saw to love and protect Christine. It was bitter cold, and she felt a violent pain in her breast; she began to breathe with difficulty. Overwhelmed by grief and physical suffering, she dragged herself to her room and threw herself upon her bed. When the day came, she was unable to leave it.

Christine had seen her father grasp her mother's arm; she had seen him rudely compel her to enter the house; and then, for the walls of the house were not thick, she had overheard tears, prayers and reproaches. She understood that it was her fate which was being decided, that her poor mother had sacrificed herself for her, and that she was face to face with the master of whom she dared not brave a single look.

Christine passed the whole night in a state of frightful anxiety; alternately yielding herself to discouragement and hope. At her age we do not easily despair of life. Terror, however, dominated every other thought; and she would have given half her existence to have some one come and speak to her, and inform her what had happened; but the day dragged on, and Wilhelmina did not appear upon the threshold of the door; the voice of her mother was not heard; the most profound silence reigned everywhere. Gothon alone came to her room; Christine ventured to ask some questions; the old servant told her that she had received orders not to answer her.

Another day dragged on; nothing interrupted Christine's solitude; nothing came to lift the veil which concealed the future from her. The poor child was exhausted; she had no longer even the energy

of her grief. She wept gently, without complaining, almost without murmuring.

Night came; she fell asleep, her heart swollen with sorrow; her mind full of fears. Hardly an hour elapsed, when she was startled by the noise of a key turning in the lock; the door opened, and Gothon, with a lamp in her hand, approached the bed.

"Get up, Mademoiselle," she said in a solemn tone, "and follow me."

Christine, with the fumes of sleep still upon her, dressed herself in haste, and silently followed the servant, who led her towards her mother's room. Gothon opened the door and drew back to allow Christine to pass. A sad spectacle met her eye.

Annunciata, pale and almost inanimate, was undergoing the last agonies of life struggling against death. Her presentiment had not deceived her; a too violent emotion had snapped the slender chord that bound her to earth. The lamp which lit the room shone directly upon her gentle and beautiful features, which suffering had been powerless to deface; her brow, white as the pillow upon which it rested, bore the impress of resignation and courage; a flash of joy overspread it when Christine entered the room. Wilhelmina and Maria were weeping upon their knees at the foot of their mother's bed. William stood a little on one side, with a book in his

hand, in which he had wished to read a prayer—but his eyes had wandered from the book to Annunciata; the big tears rolled down his cheeks.

Mr. Van Amberg, seated beside his wife's pillow, had his face shaded by his hand—no one could see its expression.

With a piercing cry, Christine rushed towards Madame Van Amberg, who received her in her arms.

"Mother!" she said, pressing her cheek against Annunciata's, "it is I who have killed you! You have done for love of me more than your strength allowed."

"No, my beloved child, no," answered Annunciata, kissing her daughter between every word; "I am dying of an old and incurable malady. I am happy that I am permitted to see you once more."

"And they did not call me to aid my sisters in nursing you!" exclaimed Christine raising her head, "and they concealed your illness from me! they left me to weep for other sorrows than yours, mother!"

"Dear child," quietly answered Annunciata, "this crisis has come very suddenly; two hours ago no one suspected the danger that threatened me; I myself asked to be permitted to fulfil my religious duties, before they called you. I wished to give myself up entirely to thoughts of God. Now I can yield to the embraces of my dear children."

And Madame Van Amberg clasped to her heart at the same time her three daughters, whose united tears fell upon her.

"Dear children," she said, "God is full of mercy for the dying, and he sanctifies a mother's benediction. I bless you, my daughters; remember me and pray for me."

The three young girls bowed their heads upon their mother's hand, and replied by tears alone to this last farewell.

"My good brother," resumed Annunciata, turning her eyes towards William, who was gazing upon her with a look full of grief and affection, "my good brother, we have lived together a long time, and you have always been a devoted, indulgent and kind friend to me; I thank you for it, brother."

William turned away his head to conceal the effort he was making to restrain his tears; but it was in vain: a sob escaped him, and abandoning an appearance of firmness which he did not possess, he said to Annunciata, while the tears rolled down his cheeks:

"Do not thank me, sister; I have done but little for you. I have not enlivened your solitude—but I have loved you—indeed I have. I hope, sister, that you will still live."

Annunciata gently shook her head. After taking leave of all, her eyes sought her husband as if she

wished to address her last words to him; but the words died upon her lips. She looked at him timidly and sadly, and then closed her eyes as if to check a starting tear.

Madame Van Amberg was growing visibly weaker—she breathed with difficulty—and the more she felt the approach of death, the more a painful anxiety which was not regret that life would soon be over, seemed to possess her. She was resigned without being calm. Her heart was destined to suffer until the end. She would look upon her children, and then avert her eyes moistened with tears. The fate of one of her daughters embittered the last moments of her life; she did not dare pronounce the name of Christine, she no longer dared to supplicate for her, and nevertheless a thousand fears and a thousand thoughts were swelling her poor heart. She was both anxious to speak and unwilling to speak. She refused herself, at this last moment, the consolation of giving one additional kiss to the least happy of her daughters; a painful self-restraint followed her to the very tomb. She was dying as she had lived, repressing her tears, concealing her thoughts. From time to time she would turn towards her husband; but his head continued to be shaded by his hand; she could detect no look which encouraged her to weep openly.

The spasm which was to break this frail existence

was rapidly approaching. Annunciata, in her agony, murmured in unintelligible accents:

"Farewell! farewell!"

Her eyes no longer obeyed her will; none could tell whom they sought.

William approached his brother, and placing his hand upon his shoulder, whispered in his ear in tones audible to him alone:

"Karl, she is dying! Have you nothing to say to this poor creature who has so long lived with you and suffered by your side, brother? Living, you no longer loved her; but she is dying; do not part with her thus! Do you not fear, Karl, lest this woman, oppressed and slighted by you, should leave this world with a leaven of resentment in her heart? Ask her then to forgive you before it is too late!"

There was a momentary pause; Mr. Van Amberg remained motionless.

Annunciata, her head thrown back, seemed already to have ceased to exist. On a sudden she moved, raised herself with difficulty, leaned towards Mr. Van Amberg, felt for her husband's hand, and when she had found it, bowed her face upon it, kissed it twice, and expired in that last kiss.

"On your knees!" cried William, "on your knees! She is in heaven! Let us entreat her to pray for us!"

And all present knelt down.

Of all the prayers which man addresses to his Maker during this life of trial, none is more solemn than that which escapes from his desolate heart, when a beloved soul flies from earth to heaven, and appears for the first time in the presence of its God.

Mr. Van Amberg rose from his knees.

"Leave the room," he said to his children and his brother; "I would be alone with my wife."

They walked slowly from the bed of death; the door opened and closed again; the dead wife and her living husband remained alone together.

Karl Van Amberg, standing by the bedside, gazed earnestly upon that pale face, which, in the calmness of death, had again assumed all the beauty of youth. A tear, which the sufferings of life had still left there—a tear which none other was destined to follow—glistened upon the cold cheek; one of the arms was still hanging outside the bed, as when it held his hand; the head was in the same position in which it had implanted that last kiss. Mr. Van Amberg gazed, and the icy envelope which seemed to surround his heart was at last broken.

"Annunciata!" he cried, "Annunciata!"

For fifteen years that name had not passed his lips. He threw himself upon his wife's corpse, took her in his arms, and kissed her forehead.

"Annunciata!" he cried, "can you not feel this kiss of peace and love? Annunciata, we have both

of us suffered much! God did not grant us happiness! Annunciata, I have loved you since the day when I first saw you a joyous child in Spain, until this frightful moment that I press you dead to my heart. O Annunciata, how great our sufferings have been!"

He wept.

"Rest in peace, poor child," he murmured; "may you find in Heaven the repose denied to you upon earth!"

His trembling hand approached Annunciata's eyes; he closed them.

"And now," he said, "you will weep no more. Your eyes are closed for the eternal sleep."

He took his wife's hands and brought them together.

"Your hands," he murmured, "have been often joined in prayer; let them remain joined forever!"

He then prepared to cover the face.

"No human eye," he said, "shall again look upon this countenance to which God had given beauty; the coffin lid will close upon this lovely head. You return to your Maker, Annunciata, still possessed of the gifts which he bestowed upon you; I am gazing upon you for the last time!"

And he drew the sheet over her face, and fell upon his knees.

"Almighty God!" he exclaimed, "I have been severe; be thou merciful!"

When, at break of day, Mr. Van Amberg left the chamber of death, his countenance had resumed its customary expression; his nature, shaken for a moment, had again recovered the mastery over itself, and found its level. Annunciata had taken with her to the tomb the last word of love, the last tear of this soul of adamant. He re-appeared to the eyes of all the master, the inflexible father, the man upon whose brow no sorrow left a trace. His daughters bowed their heads as he passed; William spoke no word to him; order and regularity returned to the house. Annunciata was buried without pomp or procession. She left, never to return to it, that melancholy house where her suffering soul had struggled through life to eternity; she ceased to live, as a sound ceases to be heard, as a cloud passes, as a flower fades; nothing stopped because she no longer was. If she was wept, she was wept in silence; if she was thought of, no word was spoken; her name was never mentioned; only a little more silence reigned in the interior of the small red house, and Mr. Van Amberg's countenance appeared to all more rigid than before.

Christine's profound grief obeyed, during the day,

the iron will which weighed upon all the members of the family; the poor child remained silent, worked, came to table, and continued the routine of every-day life, as though her heart were not broken; but when night came, when she found herself alone in the little room where her mother had so often come to weep with her, her groans burst forth, and she gave a free vent to all the emotions which she had stifled in her heart during the insupportable hours of the day; she called upon her mother, spoke to her, stretched out her arms to her; she would fain have left this world to follow her to heaven.

"Come and take me to you, mother!" she exclaimed. "Away from you and away from him, I have nothing to live for; and I no longer fear death, since I have seen you die."

She passed entire nights in gazing upon the sky; her eyes sought Annunciata in the light of the stars, in the rays of the moon; she persuaded herself that her mother was about to appear to her, and that it was not possible that she had seen her for the last time. In the midst of silence, she inclined her ear, hoping to hear Annunciata's loved and gentle voice. If a leaf rustled in the wind, her heart beat to suffocation. "She comes!" she exclaimed. Vain delusion! The Heavens never gave up the soul which had taken its flight to them; no spirit descended to

the earth, and no voice came, like a celestial chant, to break upon the silence of the night.

Since the death of Annunciata, Christine was allowed her liberty. Perhaps Mr. Van Amberg thought, and with reason, that she would take no advantage of it during these first days of grief; or perhaps, while the ashes of his wife were still warm, he hesitated to recommence the act which had caused her to shed so many tears. Be that as it may, Christine was free, at least in appearance. The three sisters, in deep mourning, never thought of passing the threshold of their home; they worked all day by the low window of the sitting-room, supped with their uncle and their father, and then retired to their rooms.

But during the long hours of their silent work, Christine often thought of her lover. She did not yet dare to make an attempt to see him; it seemed to her that the voice of her mother whispered in her ear: "My daughter, it is too soon to be happy! Continue yet a little to mourn for me alone and without consolation."

She knew that Herbert must be acquainted with her misfortune, and must understand that there are certain sorrows which should be kept unshared, and in presence of which every other emotion should be hushed. Christine, therefore, yielded submissively to the will which regulated the employment of every

hour of the day; like Wilhelmina and Maria she applied herself to her work in silence. Any one who saw these three young girls engaged upon their work with an indefatigable constancy, would never have imagined that their hearts beat very differently—that a thousand thoughts were busy in the mind of one of them, who was pining like a captive in this atmosphere of quiet and cold monotony.

One morning, after a night of tears, Christine had fallen asleep from exhaustion. Her slumber was disturbed by troubled dreams; at one moment she fancied that her mother caught her in her arms and flew away with her through the clouds; saying: "I do not wish you to live! life is sorrow. I have besought our Heavenly Father to let you die young, that you may be spared the suffering which I endured!" A moment afterwards, she saw herself clothed in white, by the side of Herbert, who said; "Come, my betrothed! life is joy, my love will preserve you from all suffering; come, we shall be happy!" Christine awoke of a sudden; a dull noise reached her ear—she looked around her; her window was open; and, upon the floor, in the middle of the room, lay a letter attached to a pebble. Christine's first impulse was to fly to the window; she saw no one; she fancied that a bush stirred by the river's side; but her eyes could distinguish nothing. She picked up the letter—she felt sure that the writin

was Herbert's. We never seem to see for the first time the handwriting of one we love; the heart recognizes it, as if the eyes had already seen it. Christine shed tears of joy. "O, my mother;" she exclaimed. She could not help referring to her mother the first moment of happiness which she enjoyed after these long days of grief and restraint.

Christine was mistaken. If her mother's soul could have returned from heaven, the angel form would have stretched its wings over the letter which her daughter was holding, that she might not read it; but Christine was alone; the rays of the rising sun were gilding the summits of the willows; recollections of love were re-awakened in the young girl's heart, and she read what follows:

"Christine, I can only write a few lines; a long letter, difficult to conceal, might never reach you. Let your heart listen to mine; let it guess what I cannot write! My love, you know that my family has entrusted me to your father, and conferred upon him complete authority over me. He can at his own option employ me according to the exigencies of his business. Christine, I have received orders to embark in one of his ships which is to sail immediately for Batavia."

A cry escaped from Christine's lips, and her eyes, glistening with tears, devoured the following lines:

"Your father places the immensity of the ocean

between us; he separates us forever. Is it possible, Christine, that we should never see each other more? Can your heart have learned to comprehend those words in the few days that we have been separated? No, my beloved Christine, no, my betrothed, we must live or die together! Your mother is no more; your presence is no longer necessary to the happiness of any one. They have no pity, no affection for you. Your future is misery. I am here, full of love and devotion; I call you—come—we will fly together. In the Helder are numerous ships; they will convey us far from these scenes where we have suffered so much. I have foreseen and prepared everything; come only—I await you. Christine, upon your decision hangs my life. Life, I do not desire it without you! Separated forever! If you sign the sentence, I shall not finish the bitter existence destined for me. I shall say, 'Unhappy the day when I saw my well-beloved for the first time! that day comprised my whole life.' And will you, Christine, when far from me, again love? love another!—or will you live without love? Oh! come—I have suffered so much without you! We will go to Spain, to Seville, to the birthplace of your mother, to that land where love and life begin together—where life becomes impossible when love is at an end! I call you—I await you—Christine! my wife! This evening, at midnight, come to the river's side; I shall be there, and

a future of happiness is ours. Come, Christine, come!"

While Christine was reading, her tears fell fast upon Herbert's letter. She experienced a moment of agonizing indecision. She loved passionately, but she was young, and love had not yet imparted to her pure heart the boldness that braves everything. She felt that she trembled. All the wise counsels which she had heard in her father's house, all the pious exhortations of her uncle William, all the holy prayers which she had learned in her infancy echoed in her ears; the Saviour upon her wooden crucifix seemed to gaze upon her; the beads of her rosary were still warm with the gentle pressure of her fingers.

"Oh! my dream, my dream!" she exclaimed; "Herbert claiming his betrothed! My mother claiming her daughter! He, life and love! She, death and heaven!" and Christine sobbed aloud.

For a moment she endeavored to contemplate an existence in that melancholy house, an isolated life, weeping for Herbert, growing old without him within those gloomy walls, where no word coming from the heart would be ever heard. She averted her thoughts with horror—she felt that such a future was impossible. She wept bitterly; she kissed her rosary and her prayer book, as if to say farewell to everything which had witnessed the innocence of her early years; her heart began to beat violently. The

fire of her glance dried her tears. She looked out at the river, at the white sail which seemed to appeal to her vows of love; she gave one last sob, as if breaking irrevocably the links which united her past and future. Her mother was no longer there—with her, all the holy thoughts which protect innocence, had returned to heaven. Christine, abandoned to herself, followed the impulse of her passionate nature; she wept, trembled, hesitated, and at last exclaimed:

"At midnight, I will be at the river's side!"

Christine dried her tears and remained for some moments motionless, to calm her violent agitation. A vast future unrolled itself before her; she would be free; a new world opened to her eyes; a new life was beginning for her.

Christine had to pass the day in silence, working with her sisters; the thread often broke in her fingers; her hand forgot to ply the needle; her wandering eyes gazed upon the horizon through the tears which filled them; time seemed to her to stand still; a thousand confused thoughts revolved in her mind: Herbert, the future, a life of happiness.

At the same time, Wilhelmina, half asleep, was singing slowly, and in an under-tone, an accompaniment to her wheel. Christine, almost in spite of herself, in spite of the agitation of her feelings, listened to the strange words of the song. They were hardly articulated—it appeared as though Wilhelmina on'

lent her voice to some invisible being as a medium of communication, so unconscious did she seem of her own words. Her voice had a melancholy echo in Christine's soul. A few tears fell upon her work. She looked at her sisters. Wilhelmina at last had fallen asleep, lulled by her own song; Maria was disentangling a knot in a skein of thread, and all her thoughts were absorbed in this occupation which seemed to occasion her neither fatigue nor impatience. The fog covered the meadow and formed close by the window a close veil impenetrable to the eye. There was no life anywhere, either of animate or inanimate nature.

Christine resumed her work, and began anew to count every minute which separated her from the hour of departure.

Night came at last. A lamp replaced the fading light of day. The group collected around the table instead of remaining seated by the window. William and Karl Van Amburg entered the room. The former took a book, and began to read to himself—the latter opened the ledgers in which he kept his business accounts. The most absolute silence prevailed in the room. The light of the lamp was insufficient; every eye was as dull as every heart was sad. Youth, age, indifference, agitation, and grief were all covered by the same veil. Silence dominated everything. The clock slowly struck the suc-

cessive hours. When ten strokes were heard, there was a slight movement among those who surrounded the table; books were closed, work was folded. Karl Van Amberg rose; his two eldest daughters came to him; he kissed their foreheads without speaking a word. Christine, who, although at liberty, still felt herself in disgrace, only bowed herself before her father. Her uncle William, who had almost fallen asleep over his book, slowly put up his spectacles, and murmured something which might be: "Good night;" but the words did not get beyond his lips, and reached the ear of no one. All left the parlor slowly and in silence. The three sisters ascended the stairs together. As she was about to enter her chamber, Christine felt a tightness at her heart. She turned round and looked back at her sisters. The corridor was very dark; it was a narrow passage into which, in broad daylight, the small panes of a single window admitted but a feeble light. The tapers which each of the young girls held in her hand, only served to throw light upon her own person, and to make her resemble a white apparition crossing the shades of night.

"Good night, Wilhelmina! good night, Maria!" murmured Christine.

The two sisters turned their heads. Christine saw a smile upon their sweet faces, and they kissed their hands to her; they then passed on without speakir

Christine found herself alone in her room; she opened the window; the night was calm; occasional clouds passed over the moon, veiling at intervals its brightness. A few stars were shining between each cloud. Christine made no preparations for departure; she only took the rosary which her mother had given to her, and the blue ribbon so long attached to the guitar; she wrapped her black mantle around her, and seated herself near the window; her heart beat rapidly, but no definite train of thought agitated her mind. Her whole person trembled, but she felt no terror; her eyes were filled with tears, but she felt no regret. It was for her a night rather solemn than sad; the hour of struggle had passed. Christine had made up her mind irrevocably, and she was waiting.

How differently may an hour count in our destinies! For Wilhelmina and Maria, who were sleeping, that hour was nothing. For their uncle William, who was between waking and sleeping, it had its true value. For Karl Van Amberg, who was working, it was short. For Christine, who was waking, it was an eternity. She looked out upon the night, and lost herself in the depth of her own thoughts. She could not comprehend the calmness of nature, while her whole being was so agitated.

"The goddess of night," she said to herself, "after all, passes with the same indifference over the entire

universe! Nothing disturbs the aspect of her immense canopy, which she spreads alike over the happy and the wretched of this world! She is eternal silence, eternal repose!"

And the young girl, uneasy and alarmed, added in a whisper:

"How gloomy and silent is everything around me! Herbert, how impatient I am to hear your voice!"

And then Christine wept like a child.

At length the clock of the red house slowly struck twelve; each stroke vibrated in Christine's heart; she stood up, and remained a moment motionless; she collected her strength, her courage, her will; and then turning to the interior of the room, she said:

"Farewell, mother!"

Many living creatures dwelt under that roof. It seemed to Christine that she left only her who was no longer there.

"Farewell, mother!" she repeated.

Then, in accordance with the plan which she had previously determined upon, she approached the window. A trellis intended for creeping plants covered the low wall. With a firm foot, Christine stepped upon the trellis and grasped the branches with her hand; she descended slowly, pausing each time that they cracked under her foot or hand. The

stillness was so complete that the slightest sound seemed sufficient to disturb the general repose: Christine's heart beat violently. At length she reached the ground. Then she was afraid to stir: it seemed to her that she was seen and heard; but the sound ceased with Christine's movements, and a stillness, productive of both consolation and fear, again reigned undisturbed.

Christine advanced a few steps, raised her head and looked at the house; there was still a light in her father's room: she shuddered; and then feeling more courage for a minute of boldness than for a half-hour of precautions, she began running across the meadow until she reached breathless the willow hedge; she fancied that the grass behind her rustled under another tread; fear blinded her, and disturbed her judgment. Before plunging behind the trees, she took a last look behind her. All was solitary and deserted. She breathed more freely, and she pushed aside the branches of the willows and dashed on. She recognized without difficulty the beloved tree, witness of former meetings; she once more leaned against it, and whispered so softly that none but a lover could hear:

"Herbert, are you there?"

An oar skimmed the water.

"I am here, Christine!" answered Herbert.

The boat approached the willow; the young stu-

dent stood up, and stretched out his arms to Christine, who sprang lightly into the boat. Their feelings were too powerful for words. Herbert instantly seized the oars, and pushed out of the little shaded inlet, breaking the branches which were an obstacle to his passage. He reached the middle of the river. Then the white sail, the signal of their loves, was hoisted; a gentle breeze filled it; the boat glided over the water, and Herbert, scarcely daring to believe his happiness, came and seated himself at Christine's feet. His hand sought hers; he heard her weep; he wept with her. They both remained for some time silent, agitated, and happy. But the night was lovely; the moon shed her softest light; the murmur of the water was more musical than by day; the damp breeze kissed their cheeks; the sail bent over them like the wing of an invisible being; they were young and they loved; it was impossible that joy should not return to their hearts.

"Thanks, thanks, Christine!" whispered Herbert, "thanks for so much devotion, confidence and love! Oh! how happy will our lives be from this moment! We are united forever!"

"United forever!" repeated Christine, and her tears fell faster than ever.

The young girl felt for the first time that too great happiness, like grief, speaks in tears.

"My betrothed, my wife," continued the student

'there is in future but one existence for us both! Oh! may our future be a long one! May we find some undiscovered retreat, where we can forget the rest of the world!"

"Herbert, I am too happy!"

"One day of such a life, Christine, and then death is better, is it not, Christine? than to grow old without ever having known such a day? Love is the true life, the second soul of our being, the better soul, without which the other only half exists! Dearest, look around you—contemplate—admire with love."

Christine raised her large eyes to the sky; she gazed for a long time, with her hand resting in Herbert's, at the passing clouds, the shining stars, the soft moonlight; but suddenly, in the midst of this sweet revery, she exclaimed:

"Look, Herbert, the sail droops along the mast, the breeze no longer blows; we make no progress."

"What matter the sail and the breeze?" exclaimed Herbert, "I have oars. The port is not distant, where a ship at anchor is awaiting our arrival to fly to the other extremity of the world."

Herbert seized the oars, and with uncovered head began to impel the boat forward with the rapidity of lightning. Christine, seated in front of him, wrapped in her black mantle, fixed her moistened eyes upon Herbert and smiled; it required an effort on her part

when she looked at the sky and all its splendor: whatever averted her eyes from Herbert's distressed her; she had not sufficiently seen her lover; she had loved him so much while absent, that she could not yet refrain from the happiness of loving him when before her.

The boat flew on, leaving a track of foam behind: day was still far off; everything favored the two fugitives, who gazed upon each other in silence as the stream urged them onward.

Suddenly, Christine exclaimed:

"Herbert, dear Herbert, do you hear nothing?"

Herbert stopped rowing, leaned his head over the boat's side and listened.

"I hear nothing, he said, except the ripple of the water upon the sand of the shore."

He resumed the oars; the boat again moved rapidly forward. Christine was pale; half risen from her seat, her head turned back, she strove to see, but the darkness was too great.

"Compose yourself, dearest," said Herbert with a smile; "fear has excited your imagination; nothing has changed around us; all is calm and quiet; everything seems to protect and love us."

"Herbert!" exclaimed Christine, starting up in the boat, "I am not mistaken! Herbert, I hear an oar behind us;—do not stop to listen. For the love of Heaven, row, Herbert, row!"

Christine's terror was so great, she appeared so sure of what she said, that Herbert silently obeyed her, and a feeling of alarm chilled his heart. Christine drew near him, seated herself at his feet and whispered:

"Herbert, we are pursued! the sound of your own oars has alone prevented you from hearing. There is a boat behind ours!"

"If it is so," exclaimed Herbert, "what matters it?—The other boat does not bear Christine, is not guided by a man who is defending his life, his happiness, his wife! My arm will weary his; his bark will not overtake mine!"

And Herbert redoubled his efforts; the veins of his arms swelled to bursting, and his forehead became covered with large drops of perspiration.

The boat cleft the waters as if it were winged. Christine continued crouching at the young man's feet, pressing against him, as if in search of a refuge.

"Alas!" she said, "I can be of no assistance to you, I can do nothing, not even pray to my mother or God to save us! Neither would listen to the prayer of a child who is a fugitive from her father's house."

Herbert continued to row; he breathed with difficulty. Suddenly he exclaimed:

"Hark! I too hear it! I too hear it!"

He bent to his oars and made a superhuman effort.

The tears which escaped from his eyes mingled with the drops of perspiration which fell from his forehead.

Other oars struck the water not far from Herbert's boat; a vigorous and firm hand wielded them. The young student felt his strength failing; he continued to row, looking with agony at Christine; neither spoke; nothing but the noise of the oars of the two boats interrupted the silence; the river foamed and rolled into long furrows behind them.

All was calm and serene as when Christine left; but the young girl's soul had passed from life to death; her eyes gleaming with a wild fire, followed in terror every movement which Herbert made; she saw by the suffering expression of his countenance, and by his tears, that there remained but little hope of escape. Herbert, nevertheless, rowed on with the energy of despair; but the fatal bark although not yet in sight, was approaching nearer every moment: its shadow darkened the river almost in the foamy track of Herbert's boat.

Christine stood up and looked behind her; at the same instant, the moon escaping from a cloud, threw its beams full upon the pale and passionless countenance of Mr. Van Amberg. Christine uttered a piercing shriek, and throwing her arms around Herbert's neck, exclaimed:

"My father! Herbert; it is my father!"

Herbert also had recognized Mr. Van Amberg.

The student had lived too long in the house of Karl Van Amberg not to have experienced, in common with all who came within the circle of his influence, the strange kind of fascination which that man exercised by a single look. The darkness seemed to have opened a moment to show to the fugitives the father, master, and judge.

"Stop Herbert," exclaimed Christine, "we are lost! escape is impossible to us! do you see my father?"

"Let me row!" replied Herbert in despair, tearing himself from Christine, who had seized his arm.

He gave so violent a pull with the oars that the boat bounded over the water, and seemed to gain a little on its pursuer.

"Herbert," resumed Christine, "I tell you we are lost! Do you not see my father? You know that all resistance now is useless. God will not work a miracle in our favor. Herbert, I will not return to my father's house. They would separate us! let us die together, dear Herbert!"

Christine threw herself into her lover's arms; the oars dropped from the young man's hands; a cry of agony escaped him as he pressed Christine convulsively to his heart. For a moment, a single moment, he thought that he would obey Christine, and plunge with her into the river; but Herbert's heart was noble, and he shook off this temptation of despair.

"No," he said; "God gives life, to him alone it

belongs to take it away! My hand, which would have willingly heaped at your feet all the treasures of this world, shall not be the instrument of your death!"

And as Christine was sobbing upon his shoulder, he said in a choked voice:

"My love, my betrothed, may Heaven bless you! You have loved me with courage; your devotion has led you to attempt impossibilities; you have dared to trust yourself to me, and wretch that I am, I am unable to defend you! O my poor Christine, obey your father—let me not be the cause of your eternal unhappiness! Gracious heaven! will no means of saving her be granted to me?"

And Herbert looked despairingly at the river and at the banks; he sought a chance for escape; but he sought in vain.

"Herbert, Herbert!" said Christine, "without you there is nothing in the world for me! I shall die of the excess of my love for you!"

At this moment, a severe shock made the boat quiver; the pursuing bark struck violently against Herbert's, and Mr. Van Amberg stepped into it. Instantly Herbert pressed Christine to his heart and retreated, as if he could by his strength withhold her from her father; as if he could retreat far enough not to be reached. With a vigorous arm, Mr. Van Amberg seized Christine, whose slender form bent upon her father's shoulder like a reed.

"Sir," cried Herbert in despair, "have mercy on her! I alone am to blame. Do not inflict any punishment upon her—I promise to depart—to renounce her. Pity, sir, for Christine!"

Herbert spoke to a statue who neither listened nor answered. Wresting Christine's hand from Herbert's grasp, Mr. Van Amberg returned to his boat, and pushed the student's violently with his foot. Compelled to yield to the impulse, the two boats separated: the one, vigorously impelled, reascended the river; the other left to itself floated down the current in the opposite direction. Erect in the prow of his bark, his head raised, his arms folded on his breast, Mr. Van Amberg fixed upon the young man a terrible look, and then disappeared in the darkness. All was over. The father had recovered his daughter, and there was no human power that could thenceforward tear her from his arms.

Eight days after this fatal night, the gates of a convent closed upon Christine Van Amberg.

On the frontier of Belgium, upon the summit of a hill, stands a large white building of irregular architecture, a confused mass of walls, roofs, angles and platforms. At the foot of the hill there is a village whose inhabitants never behold without a feeling of respect the edifice which towers over their humble

dwellings. For there is seen the steeple of a church, and there is heard unceasingly the pious sound of bells, proclaiming afar, that upon the summit of this mountain prayers are offered to God for all mankind. This building is a convent; the poor and the sick are familiar with the winding path which leads to the hospitable door of the sisters of the Visitation.*

The spot has nothing pleasing about it; the surrounding country is not calculated to give a charm to solitude, and to lead our thoughts from the loveliness of creation to the Creator. It is a retired nook, which is seldom visited; those who are born there are attached to it without admiring it; it is quiet, without being particularly barren nor fertile; it is neither very thickly nor very thinly settled. The sky is somewhat cloudy; the sea breeze blows almost uninterruptedly, not stopping at the limit of the waves, but rushing on over the neighboring land and gamboling over the thatched roofs of the village. Occasional dots of verdure mingle with the arid lines of the horizon. Those who had come there and built a sanctuary for eternal prayer, possessed undoubtedly that firm and rigid faith which asks no aid from anything that speaks to the imagination.

It was the gates of this convent which opened to

* For the details cited in reference to the regulations of Convents of the Visitation, see the Constitutions of Saint François de Sales, book vii. of his works.

receive Christine Van Amberg. Into this austere place, the dwelling of silence and self-denial, Christine entered full of youth, life and love. It appeared to her that the entrance-stone of a sepulchral vault had already closed upon her.

In a cell, in no respect more convenient nor better furnished than the other cells of the convent, the Superior was seated by a window, reading a letter. She was a woman of some forty years, of a mild countenance, somewhat pale and delicate, but calm and composed. Whoever saw her would have imagined that she had never felt a ray of the sun or heard the noise of the outer world; and such, indeed, was the case.

The Superior had entered the convent very young, and had passed her life there; she knew nothing of the rest of the world. Religion had not come to her as a consolation after grief; it had been the beginning and the end. In her soul, there was nothing but repose—like a tree whose foliage has never been rustled by the wind. The calm of the first hour of her existence had lasted during her whole life. Her eyes had never looked beyond the convent-walls. Her ears had only heard the soft, low voices of her companions, the chanting of prayers, and the sound of bells. Her heart had never felt anything but indifference to the world, and a holy desire to fly to the bosom of her God. She did not know that life

could be loved. She was passing through it without counting the days, and without permitting herself to long for the end, any more than she would have permitted her foot to walk quickly over the pavement of the convent halls. She was methodical, self-restrained in gesture, movement and thought, happy with that equal happiness which a pure conscience and the love of God bestow. Before being at the head of the establishment, she was called sister Louisa Maria. She was now called the Superior. In three years more she was to have the happiness of returning among the sisters whose only duty consists in prayer.

Here is the letter which the Superior was reading:

"*Madame la Supérieure:*

"I send you your niece, Christine Van Amberg, and beg you to oblige me by keeping her with you. My intention is that she shall embrace a religious life; employ the influence of your wise counsels to predispose her mind to it. Serious faults committed by this child compel me to remove her from my house, and for the sake of her future happiness it is necessary that she should be watched in a manner impossible except in a convent. Be pleased, my dear and respected relative, to receive her under your roof; the best wish that can be formed for your niece Christine is, that she should make up her mind to remain

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there forever. If she inquires about a young man named Herbert, you can tell her that he has left for Batavia, and that thence he will be transferred to our still more distant places of business.

"I am respectfully, *Madame la Supérieure*, your relative and friend,

"KARL VAN AMBERG."

This letter excited no curiosity in the superior's mind; she had not yet seen Christine; she could not speak to her at that moment, for it was the hour of silence. After having read what had been written to her by Karl Van Amberg, who was a member of her family, she turned her thoughts from the subject, and again took up the book in which she had been looking for some maxims for meditation. Her mind, long accustomed to obedience, with a slight effort reverted to serious thoughts. When the clock struck, the superior went to the choir, prayed for sometime surrounded by the sisters, arose from her knees without knowing whether it was hours or minutes that she had passed upon them before the altar, and gave the signal for ending the silence by saying to the nun who accompanied her: "May God bless us, my very dear sister!" And then returning to her cell, the superior sent for Christine Van Amberg.

Christine came; her eyes were full of tears—her cheeks were colorless—her breath was short, and

came from her lips almost like a sob—her limbs shook with a nervous trembling—she could hardly stand, and seemed to be suffering terribly both in mind and body.

The superior looked at Christine in great astonishment. It was the first time that she had seen a human creature under the influeuce of such intense emotion. Her heart which had not hardened to the woes of others, because it had never known them, was at once moved to pity, and tears came into her eyes; but her tears were unlike Christine's—they were tears of compassion which seemed to flow from heaven for the consolation of the unfortunate.

The nun arose from her seat, went to Christine who was standing by the door, made her sit down by her side, and said to her gently:

"My child, I see that you have great need of God's assistance; he dwells in this house where he is served with love; you shall pray to him with us—we will pray to him with you."

"I do not wish to stay here, Madame!" exclaimed Christine; "I shall die if I stay imprisoned in this convent! I will not, I cannot become a nun; restore me my liberty, madame!"

These words were pronounced with the energy of despair, and in a tone which had never before been heard within the convent walls. The superior remained for a moment bewildered; she looked at

Christine as though she could not understand her meaning.

"Oh! let me go, Madame!" continued the young girl, falling at the superior's feet, kissing her hands, and moistening them with her tears; "in pity, let me go! I have been free all my life; I am betrothed to a poor young man who will die if we are kept separated. I will be his devoted and obedient wife—I will fulfil every duty. I have no longer a mother—I have no one on earth to take pity on me! You, Madame, who resemble an angel, will not refuse to let me go!"

The superior was moved. Her emotion was mingled with surprise, almost with terror: she shuddered at beholding the soul created by the Lord to study and worship him, yield itself, in one of his creatures, to the tempest of passions, like a leaf blown by the wind from the tree; but, at the bottom of her heart, her correct and enlightened judgment reproached severely Karl Van Amberg for the use which he had made of his paternal authority. She took Christine's hand, and said to her mildly:

"Call me mother; here no one is called *Madame;* we are a large family; you are only surrounded by sisters and myself, whom you should address as mother. Do not speak to me of your past life—I should not possess the skill to cure its wounds. You will find in this house hearts not more feeling than

mine, but more enlightened to guide you. You must understand, my child, that you cannot at present leave here; you are entrusted to me; I can only remove you from this convent to restore you to your father. Since he thinks it proper for the present to exclude you from his dwelling, it seems to me, my daughter, that after a father's house is closed, there is nothing left but the house of God. Try for a little while to breathe the air of this peaceful retreat; seek among us repose without yielding up your liberty, take the black robe of a postulante—the robe of serge under which the heart soon learns to beat only for God."

"I, I!" exclaimed Christine, "lay aside the garments worn by happy and free women! Oh! it would seem to me to be leaving Herbert forever! it would seem to me to be placing an eternal obstacle between us! Oh! no, no, never! Mother, will you not descend from heaven to aid your unhappy daughter?"

"The robe of the postulantes is not the garment of the pious women who have consecrated themselves to God. This garment has to be twice changed, before vows are pronounced. The garment which I propose to you is intended for those who desire to make trial of a cloister-life: you will take it off and leave it at the threshold of our door, when it shall open at your request to restore you to the world; but none can dwell under the roof of this convent

without wearing the badge which separates the servants of God from the rest of mankind. This is not an establishment for education—no one can come among us except as a postulante, and even if you should remain but a few months, you must follow the rules and wear the dress of the convent. Your father is irritated. What would you gain by being taken back to him at present? Endeavor to overcome his anger by your submission; wait—hope—remain here—we will pray for you; no one sorrows here long."

"What shall I do? what will become of me?" exclaimed Christine. "Is there no place for me on earth—is there not a single heart to take pity on me? These gates now closed upon me will only open to return me to my father! What shall I do?"

"Obey and pray, my child," answered the superior. "Time will do the rest. Fear not, I will protect you."

"I cannot pray," exclaimed Christine. "Despair knows not the language of prayer. I rebel against my destiny. I wish to be free to love and to live in the open air; here, here, I cannot pray."

The superior placed her hand on Christine's lips.

"Then, we will pray for you," she said.

"Ah," exclaimed Christine, "if all my efforts to procure my liberty are powerless, there is in the world another who suffers as I do, and who will find

means to deliver the poor prisoner. Herbert has told me that nothing is impossible for those who love. Herbert will come and rescue me."

"Herbert has sailed for Batavia—he will remain there a long time; thence he will go still farther; he has left Holland for many years."

Christine uttered a shriek, and remained for some time completely overwhelmed by this last blow. After a while she raised her pale countenance, over which the tears were streaming, and said:

"Now, all places are indifferent to me—all garments are the same in my eyes. Herbert has abandoned me—he has consented to our eternal separation."

Eight days afterward, Christine assumed the dress of a postulante; although she knew that it did not compromise her liberty, still she wept. Two lay sisters assisted her to dress. Motionless as a statue, Christine remained passive in their hands, but her heart protested energetically against all those promises to God which this costume seemed to imply. She desired her liberty, even if all other happiness was denied her, and, in the excitement of her imagination, she dreamed of crossing the ocean to find her Herbert. Never did the pious garment of a postulante cover a more agitated heart—never was it watered with bitterer tears.

When the toilet was all but completed, one of the

sisters took Christine's hand, and attempted, in compliance with the rules, to remove a ring from one of her fingers. Christine abruptly withdrew her hand.

"It was Herbert's gift," she exclaimed; "this ring, all that is left to me, will only leave me with life!"

The superior entered the room.

"I will keep this ring!" Christine repeated, pointing to the jewel which glittered on her finger.

The superior requested the sisters to leave, and, fixing upon Christine a calm, motherly, and serious look, said:

"My child,—"

These words recalled to the young girl's recollection the happy days when her mother used thus to address her.

"My child, the words *I will* are never spoken in this place. God alone *wills*, and we obey. Be not alarmed, no engagements are entered into here except voluntarily; at present this convent is for you only a retreat selected by your father. If, after having listened to the voices which will speak to you of God, you continue to weep as you now weep, the gates shall be opened and I will restore you to your father; till then obey as we all obey."

"My ring, my poor ring!" mournfully continued Christine, "all that remains to me of Herbert!"

"There are better links here between souls, my

child. Prayer is a better remembrancer than all visible signs to those who can think of each other without remorse. And this hair chain which is around your neck?"

"It is my mother's hair!" exclaimed Christine; "even here I can kiss it and cover it with my tears!"

"Here you are nearer heaven, where your mother is, than you were when living in the world; but here even this token, my child, must be laid at the feet of God. A postulante can wear no earthly ornament."

"Alas! alas!" exclaimed Christine, "there will remain nothing to me on earth—neither the beings whom I loved, nor the objects which I loved on their account!"

"Give me the ring—I will return it to you if you leave us. As to your mother's hair, listen to me: at the extremity of the cloisters, there are excavated in the thickness of the wall several small chapels where, every spring, we are in the habit of bringing the first fruits of the year; it is sometimes permitted to place there relics dear to our hearts. Go and deposit there your mother's hair; there you can see it and pray before the altar which contains it."

Christine followed the superior; they advanced in silence under the covered galleries which enclose the four sides of the court. The echo of their footsteps upon the stone pavement was the only sound to be heard; the strip of sky visible above the walls was

covered by clouds; the daylight which found its way between the time-darkened walls was somewhat dim; all was solitude and silence. This was not one of those convents where young girls who come to be educated bring with them youth and bustle—movement by the side of the calm austerity of a religious life: it was a convent entirely devoted to silence, to prayer, to self-denial; and there are only very simple or very elevated souls which can comprehend the beauty of this perfect repose. Diseased minds like Christine's recoiled in fear from the contemplation of this holy place.

The superior stopped before a small chapel dedicated to Providence. It was evident that this chapel was beloved. It was ornamented by numerous offerings. The quiet there seemed even greater than elsewhere; so was the gloom. From this angle of the walls the sun disappeared sooner than from the other extremity of the cloister. The superior took the chain of hair and placed it on the altar. Christine, sinking upon her knees, exclaimed:

"Heavenly Father, it is not I that give, but thou that takest!"

"My daughter," said the Superior, placing her hand gently upon Christine's shoulder, "be careful of your words and of your thoughts; God is here upon this altar; under your feet are tombs; this very pavement is formed of monumental stones.

Sister Van Amberg, remain here some minutes in prayer; then you will follow us, when the procession moves across the gallery to the choir of the convent."

Christine was alone; she stood up, motionless, not daring to move. The evening was calm and mild; a peaceful silence reigned around; upon the grass which grew in the court fell the moon's first rays, and there was nothing of terror in the tombs beneath. They emblemed a holy repose after a holy life; but to Christine's excited imagination, nothing appeared in its true light. The increasing darkness, the neighborhood of the dead, the black garments which she wore, the name of Sister Van Amberg, bestowed upon her as if she were no longer Christine, as of old, the high walls which surrounded her—all this chilled her with terror. She felt stifled—she fancied herself literally buried alive; she was frightened at the noise of her sobs, which echoed through the arcades of the cloister, at the shadow of her figure which was exaggerated in the moonlight, at the silence which made her sighs and tears so audible. She did not pray—she looked with alarm around her, and remained motionless leaning against the wall.

From above the arches of the church, the sound of a bell was heard; it tolled slowly and at equal intervals; it was sad and soft as an echo from heaven; Christine listened. Her diseased imagination busied

itself to recognize in it a voice which was calling her from over the ocean-waves; and then the young girl fancied that she was listening to a whisper of her mother's soul, calling her from the realms of eternal bliss; and at last the bell seemed to say to Christine,

"Pray! pray!"

And Christine answered to herself:

"I will pray when I shall be free; I cannot pray here!"

While Christine's heart was thus variously agitated, within the inclosure of the same walls other hearts with peaceful joy were saying:—"Blessed be the Lord who has given us our quiet retreat, our daily repose, and the great happiness of loving him!"

A door at the end of the gallery opened; a long procession of nuns passed before Christine, slowly, in silence, and with bowed heads; then came the novices clad in white, and then the postulantes, whose long black woollen robes dragged upon the pavement. The last one of them softly approached Christine and assisted her to rise, pointing to the door of the choir through which could be seen the candles burning upon the altar, and some of the nuns already upon their knees before the sanctuary. Christine arose and entered the choir, but she did not pray.

For some time Sister Van Amberg was left to herself, being only required to be present at prayers. To Christine these were days of horrible agony.

Every eye that fell upon her found her countenance bathed in tears. It is not in a convent as in the world, where a thousand kind attentions and a thousand questions surround those who sorrow. Christine wept without concealment; it was noticed, and she was pitied without any expression of sympathy. In a convent, the friend and consoler is God. They left the silence uninterrupted, that His voice might be the better heard.

Day succeeded day, and Christine did not cease to weep bitter tears. She murmured against heaven and against man; her heart was in revolt—everything annoyed her—everything increased her suffering. She seated herself near the gates—those gates forever closed; but she fancied that there a freer air reached her than in the interior of the convent. When the mistress of the postulantes would stop by her side and endeavor to calm her by gentle words, Christine only answered by bowing her head upon her breast, and giving fresh vent to her tears.

The superior, a silent and intelligent witness of all this grief, felt her conscience touched. After having watched Christine for a long time, she took her pen and wrote as follows :—

"TO MR. KARL VAN AMBERG.

"*My very dear Kinsman*—

"You sent me your daughter, expressing a desire that she might become a nun. My purpose

is to tell you that after careful reflection and an attentive examination, it seems to me that your intentions in regard to her should not be carried out. Sometimes God calls pious and happy souls, who come to him in the beginning of life with joy and confidence; at other times, souls broken by misfortune, who come to him as the great consoler of every suffering; but he does not open his dwelling to those who only come in obedience to another's will, and whose hearts are torn by the sacrifice. These too, however, are his children, but he says to them: 'Go and serve me elsewhere.' There will be room in heaven for all the laborers of the Lord, in whatever vineyard they may have been employed. I entreat you, my dear kinsman, to send for your daughter Christine, to extend your indulgence to her, and to permit her to live in her father's house, which is also one of God's houses. Here your daughter could not be happy, and here we are all happy. May God be with you, my very dear kinsman.

"SISTER LOUISA-MARY,
"Superior of the Convent of the Visitation at ——."

And then the superior waited, surrounding Christine with repose and silence, and praying God to come to the assistance of this unhappy child. But it was repose and silence which were killing Christine. She would have preferred to be able to break out in reproaches, to be able to disturb the hearts

of all by the disturbance of her own heart. The laws of the convent weighed upon her like a yoke of iron.

System and habit, the creators of order and harmony, only appeared to her diseased imagination like the tyranny of a will other than her own. When elevated thoughts have not brought about the voluntary sacrifice of ourselves, whatever exacts it materially, by controlling the actions without controlling the mind, inevitably makes us cruelly suffer. When Christine walked, she was compelled to walk slowly; when she spoke, she must speak low; when the bell rang, she must kneel with a barren heart; when the clock struck ten, she must go to bed without being able to sleep; and at the earliest light of day, she must rise, her eyes heavy from want of rest. Nine times a day the bell called to prayers. To the nuns, this bell, like a friendly voice from heaven, seemed by dividing time to render it easier to pass; but to Christine it was the signal of a forced obedience which crushed her heart, so full of the passions of earth.

When she was alone in her cell at night she would arise and walk to her little window, that she might look out upon the sky. The moon and the clouds recalled to her that last night of hope and love, when she was floating upon the river at Herbert's side, believing in an eternal union of their souls, and dreaming of liberty under the soft sky of Spain; and then

she would call Herbert, speak to him, and weep. After these sleepless nights, she would come down to the choir with her cheeks still wet with tears, and a death-like paleness on her face; and the eye of the superior would rest upon her with an expression of both affectionate pity and silent reproach.

One day the superior sent for her and said:

"My daughter, I wish to speak to you; I would fain be of service to you. Your constant tears sadden my heart; I did not believe that it was possible for a human creature to weep so much. The laws of the convent, which I read over every day, say, in reference to the superior: '*She will bring up with maternal love the sisters who, like little children, are still weak in devotion, recollecting what Saint Bernard says to those who devote themselves to the service of souls: "The charge of souls is not of strong souls, but of infirm souls."*' Does life, my poor daughter, seem very hard to you?"

"Yes," answered Christine, "beyond what I can endure; I wish to be free."

"You are but sixteen; you are necessarily dependent upon those with whom you happen to be; you can be nowhere free."

"But I am miserable; let me be miserable, and let me weep."

"My daughter," answered the superior, "I already appreciated the value of the quiet happiness which I

have enjoyed; but you have taught me to know all the evils from which I have been preserved. What is there here that can appear worse than the agitation with which the outside world has filled your heart? Since childhood, with the sun's earliest rays, the same bell has called us to prayers. We love that bell; it recalls those salutary thoughts which should follow us in all places. In the choir, some of us sing pure and gentle hymns; our prayers are beautiful when only read by the eyes; they are still more beautiful when chanted by youthful voices: a profound calm is in our hearts—nothing pre-occupies our thoughts—no evil can happen to us; we can lose nothing—no misfortune can reach us. The hours are neither long nor short—they are occupied, and always the same. We obey strictly the orders of the saint who has traced the road for us to follow to attain immortal bliss. Our labor is for the poor, or for our house. There are hours of unbroken silence; but those who have the habit of reflection, hear the voice of God when other sounds are stilled. We obey not the powers of earth, but God. There is no permanent authority here. In three years I shall be at your side. We are poor, but each day brings the bread necessary for it, and clothing to preserve us from the cold. We have no ties, but we are all sisters; and that we may love the whole world—the love of individuals is forbidden to us. That our hearts may

open the wider for all our brothers, we are not permitted to make selection of one. If nothing belongs to us —if we do nothing but pass to and from our cells—if we constantly change our books and our rosaries—all this is because we are happy souls seeking for heaven, and because it is necessary to break away from all earthly ties in order to be ready when the moment comes to take our departure. We are cloistered—but of what consequence to us is a world with which we are unacquainted? Our souls escape beyond the walls of this convent; they seek not to follow the roads of earth—they rise and fly to heaven to the worship of their God. Lastly, we are calm, and every strayed sheep which comes from afar to seek the protection of our roof, tells us that repose only exists here, and is found nowhere among the places of men. All our sisters are good and simple persons, quick to work, mild in disposition, who can smile when they have done praying, who can speak the language of cheerfulness as well as the language of instruction. Come, Sister Van Amberg—do not harden your heart against the atmosphere of peace which prevails in the shades of the convent; do not demand imperiously from the All-Powerful who has created you for eternal happiness, to bestow also upon you all the blessings of a life the duration of which is but a moment to him. Open your soul to faith. *Faith is*

a lovely dawn which continually expands into the full brilliancy of day."*

The Superior was silent. Christine remained with bowed head; she had listened, but without ceasing to weep. The Superior, with clasped hands, prayed inaudibly at her side; she did not inform the young girl of the letter she had written to Karl Van Amberg; she kept secret the hope she entertained of restoring her to her family at some future day; but, full of holy zeal, she was endeavoring at least, during this temporary residence at the convent, to conquer her ardent and unsubdued soul.

One day Christine was sent to nurse a sister who was ill. Each nun took her turn at the bed of suffering. Christine was astonished on entering the nun's cell, to see that it had lost the austere and gloomy aspect of all the other cells. Upon a little table standing near the bed was placed a vase filled with flowers, a luxury forbidden in the interior of the convent. A white bouquet ornamented an image of the virgin. A pious book was lying open before the nun, who smiled gently at Christine's astonishment.

"Sister," she said, "come and inhale the perfume that pervades this room. Saint François de Sales has written with his own hand that it is proper to render the chambers of the sick agreeable, to bring these flowers to gladden the eye. Sister,

* Saint François de Sales. *Treatise upon Divine Love.*

the angels of heaven descend to the bedside of those who suffer; for those who suffer with uncomplaining hearts are beloved of God. See—our dwelling becomes cheerful just as the moment to leave it approaches. It has the appearance of being prepared for a festival—for is it not a festival when we take wings for heaven?"

"Sister," said Christine, "do you suffer much?"

"Yes, I suffer, and I think that I am going to die."

"Alas! you are very young!"

"I confide in the God who calls me—I am ready to go and meet him."

"Have you been long in the convent?"

"Ten years."

"Ten years!"

"The time has passed very quickly—it has consoled me for sorrows which followed me when I fled from the world."

"Sorrows did you say? You have wept! Oh! speak to me, I beseech you, sister!"

"I lost my betrothed three days before the day appointed for our marriage. He died before my eyes; I wished to die with him: God did not permit it. I did at least all that I could do—I left the world—I came here to pray for him and to await the moment to rejoin him."

"Separated forever from him whom you loved! Oh, how you must have suffered, sister!"

"Separated on earth, but not forever," the nun answered; "yet," she added, "I have lived near him: those who are no more are not very far removed from those who only live to pray."

"And you have not constantly wept?"

"I have wept, sister, and your tears have recalled to me that my own used to flow; but I remained longer than you in the world—I had already learned to know it. We are ever separating on earth—we die, we are forgotten, our very affections change; we love less when we have once loved with all the strength of which our hearts are capable. Everything is mournful—tears are flowing everywhere. I came to ask eternal hopes to console me for the broken hopes of earth. Life is short; the happiest are those who look beyond it. I have lived in peace with a memory—I die in peace with a hope."

Christine asked no more questions—but her tears flowed, and her own heart answered that *she* would always weep—and that for her there was no alternative but to live with Herbert or die.

One night, while the nuns were sleeping, the convent bell began to toll. It was the signal that a sister was dying: it was the sister whom Christine had nursed a few days before, who was about to end her short existence.

If life in a convent differs from life everywhere else, death in a convent differs still more from death in other places. The real death of the nun occurs

when she makes her vows; the other is only the moment of repose and reward. Accordingly, in this cell which a soul was about to quit for heaven, there was neither sobbing nor weeping; the faces of all present were composed, grave and calm. The light of the tapers, brought for the last ceremonies of religion, fell full upon the resigned countenance of the dying woman; her lips opened in response to the prayers of her companions; her fingers still touched the beads of the rosary which she had worn daily at her side. The superior and the sisters were kneeling at the foot of the bed; those of the nuns who had not found room in the narrow cell, were on their knees near the door in the corridor. There was neither grief, nor agitation, nor alarm; profound silence, interrupted only by prayers, pervaded the convent. The dying woman was quiet—all present were collected; death was no longer the frightful spectre which chills with horror, but the consoling angel sent to conduct home the children of God. There all human passions, all ties of earth were forgotten or conquered. No regret saddened the last journey; the hymn of deliverance was alone heard. Every heart that beat wished for heaven—every eye that looked saw it open to receive the bride of Christ. She who was stretched upon that bed was not dying with the love of life—the friends who surrounded her were not living with the fear of death: it was a

solemn and imposing spectacle. As the tired traveller, after following slowly the long and straight road at the end of which he perceives a hospitable roof, arrives at the place of rest with his heart full of joy; so the nun, after a succession of long monotonous days, comes with a holy exstacy to the day of death, which gives her heaven for a dwelling-place.

Christine was upon her knees, but her heart was full of the troubles of earth. She loved life, and it was of life and not of heaven that she asked for hope and happiness.

In the midst of a prayer, the soul of the nun took its flight. She died in the peace of the Lord, without hope and without fear.

The ceremonies which succeed the death of a Sister of the Visitation were then performed. They brought from a chest the crown of white roses, carefully preserved since the day when she pronounced her vows, and they placed it on her head for the last time. This white crown is worn by a nun for a few hours on the day of her taking the veil, and is then removed, with her knowledge that these flowers will only again touch her brow when chilled by death. The nun, with the crown on her head, is exposed in her open coffin in the centre of the choir of the convent. Two sisters were appointed to watch. Christine Van Amberg was one of those who were to kneel by the sister who had just expired.

The night was long and solemn: on one side a woman who was no more; near her, a woman agitated by all the passions of earth; between the two a nun, alive like the one, calm like the other.

At the break of day the superior came to pray by the dead; then she departed, leaving the other sisters to watch as Christine had watched.

"My daughter," she said quietly to Christine, "this night must have taught you salutary lessons. If our life seems sad to you, our death must seem happy."

"Mother," answered Christine, "I too wish to die."

"My child, God will let you live," resumed the Superior; "your soul is not ready; try to subdue yourself and pray."

One day the gate of the convent opened not to admit, but to dismiss. It was an unusual event, and perhaps the most painful of the trials imposed upon the pious sisters who live in the sacrifice of self. A nun of the sisterhood had for twenty years spent uniform and quiet days in this cloister, whose wall, church, and court she loved; nothing belonged to her on earth: she had every year changed her cell, her books, and her rosary; but the convent walls, the choir, the stones upon which she had kneeled so many years, the companions whom she looked at when she did not speak to them, all these constituted her for-

tune, her friends and her ties. An order emanating from superior authority, directed the nun to go beyond the seas to a foreign land, to aid with her zeal and faith a distant convent, where she was to remain the rest of her life without any hope of returning to the roof which she had chosen for herself. The walls of the cloister echoed no word of complaint. The nun prepared to obey in silence. If tears were starting to her eyes, she forced them back to her heart, and her heart was so subdued that it required no violent struggle to conceal the sadness that weighed upon it. Many hands were extended to her who was departing—many faces wore a serious expression—many lips were opened, but "*God be with you, sister!*" were the only words that were uttered. Those who remained prayed; she who was leaving prayed. They only expressed their feelings in these gentle words: "God's will be done!" And then the gates closed; calmness, order and labor were again resumed. They had obeyed with simplicity and humility; this was all.

"My daughter," said the Superior to Christine, "does not this example of self-sacrifice and of absolute obedience, teach resignation to your soul?"

Christine made no answer, but her silence was not the submission of her heart.

The Superior asked no further questions; occasionally, however, she would call Christine to her cell, and

make her sit down beside her; she would lend her books and leave her to read or to reflect. The walls of the Superior's cell, like all the others, were covered with sentences—voices as it were which spoke without words. Christine's little stool was placed opposite one upon which was written: *Come unto me all ye who are wearied and heavy-laden and I will give you rest!* During the long hours of silence, if Christine raised her eyes, they met this appeal to all the unfortunate. If she looked another way, they fell upon the wooden crucifix; if she again turned her head, she saw the Superior upon her knees; if she lowered her eyes, her prayer-book was open before her. At times, Christine would close her eyes to yield to her own thoughts; but then she heard the low toll of the convent bell again calling to prayer. When she left her cell, she saw her companions calm and collected, and they saluted her with: "God be with you, sister!" When she ate, a gentle voice called upon her to thank the Lord.

At other times, when the bell rang *the hour of obedience*, all the nuns left the occupations upon which they were engaged, and surrounding the Superior, awaited her orders. The Superior sent the sisters to perform various tasks, in her own discretion; no one exercised her choice—all obeyed. The nuns repaired to different parts of the convent to fulfil the various

duties assigned to each, and this hour had received the holy name of *the hour of obedience.*

Christine saw all this, but no one questioned her. Whatever passed in her heart was unknown to any human being.

The bell, the chants, the prayers, the silence, the pious examples, the gentle words, the walls covered with holy maxims, the tombs suggestive of serious thoughts—all these things, like invisible angels, surrounded Christine; but no one questioned her.

The Superior received no answer to the letter which she had sent to Karl Van Amberg. She wrote a second time. She spoke to Christine's father in language still firmer; she almost ordered that his daughter should be sent for; again her letter remained without reply.

Five years had elapsed.

One day the convent gate opened to admit a stranger who requested permission to speak with the Superior. It was an old man; a staff supported his trembling steps; he gazed around him with surprise and emotion while he was waiting in the little parlor; several times he passed his hands over his eyes, as if to wipe away tears.

"Poor, poor child!" he murmured.

When the Superior came behind the latticed bars

of the parlor, the old man advanced eagerly towards her.

"I am William Van Amberg," he said, "the brother of Karl Van Amberg; I am come, Madame, for Christine Van Amberg, his daughter and my niece."

"You are come very late," answered the Superior; "Sister Martha-Mary is on the point of pronouncing her vows."

"Martha-Mary! I do not know that name," resumed William Van Amberg; "it is Christine whom I seek; it is Christine whom I am asking for."

"Christine Van Amberg, now sister Martha-Mary, is about to pronounce her vows."

"Christine a nun! O, heaven! it is impossible—Madame, you have broken this child's heart; despair alone could induce her to take the veil; you have made her suffer too much—you have been cruel; but I bring to her liberty, the certainty of the happiness which she has all her life longed for, the permission to marry him whom she loves. Christine will follow me, if I can only speak to her."

"Speak to her, then. She is free to go, if such is her will!"

"Thanks, Madame, thanks! Send me my child, send me my Christine. I am waiting for her with impatience and joy."

The Superior withdrew.

When left alone, William, deeply moved, looked around him; the more he looked, the more he felt

his heart disturbed; a frightful weight oppressed him; he wished that he could take Christine in his arms, as he used to do when she was little, and fly away with her in all haste, far from those bars which almost frightened him.

"Poor child," he murmured, "what a retreat for the bright years of your youth! Oh! how great must have been your suffering! But be comforted, dear child, I am here at last!"

He remembered Christine as a wild young girl delighting in liberty and in motion—and then as an impassioned woman, full of excitement, love, and independence. A smile passed over the old man's lips when he thought of her burst of joy when he should say to her, "You are free, and Herbert is waiting to lead you to the altar!" His heart beat as it never had beaten since the days of his youth. Without his knowledge, tears escaped from his eyes: he could not tell if they were tears of sadness at the sight of the dreary place which had been for five long years Christine's residence, or if they were tears of joy called up by the happiness of seeing her again and delivering her; he counted the minutes, and remained with his eyes fixed upon the little door which was about to open to admit Christine. He could not press her to his heart, the grating prevented it, but at least he could hear and see her. Suddenly the blood rushed violently to his heart at the sound

of a door creaking upon its hinges; this door opened. A novice, clad in white, approached William slowly; he looked, drew back, hesitated, and exclaimed:

"O God! is that Christine?"

William had preeservd affectionately in his memory the image of a young, brilliant-eyed, sun-burnt girl, lively, active, abrupt in her movements, running rather than walking, like the kid that loves the mountain steeps. He saw before him a tall young girl, pale and white as the garments which covered her; her hair was concealed by a broad band of linen; her slender figure was obscurely defined under the folds of her white woollen robes; her movements were slow; her black eyes were dimmed by an indescribable languor; a profound calm pervaded her whole person, a calm that was so great that it resembled the absence of life. One might have supposed that her eyes looked without seeing, that her lips could no longer open to speak, that her ears listened without hearing. Sister Martha-Mary was beautiful, but of a beauty unknown to this world. Hers was the beauty of infinite repose, of changeless calm.

The old man was affected to the bottom of his heart; the words expired upon his lips; and he extended his hands towards Christine although he knew that they could not reach her. Martha-Mary made

an effort to smile on beholding her uncle; but she neither spoke nor moved.

"O my child!" William at last exclaimed; "oh! how you suffer here!"

Martha-Mary gently shook her head, and the tranquil look which she fixed upon her uncle protested against his supposition.

"Is it possible that five years can have thus changed my Christine? My heart alone recognizes you, my child, and not my eyes! They have then compelled you to great austerities, terrible privations?"

"No."

"A cruel bondage has weighed upon you?"

"No."

"Then you have been ill?"

"No."

"Then your poor heart has suffered so much that it has broken. You have wept much?"

"I no longer recollect it."

"Christine, Christine, are you living? or is it the shade of Annunciata risen from the grave? O my child, when I look at you, I fancy that I see her again stretched lifeless upon the bed of death!"

"Martha-Mary raised her large eyes towards heaven; she clasped her hands and murmured:

"Mother!"

"Christine, speak to me! weep with me! you

alarm me by your calm and silence.—Ah! in the emotion which has overwhelmed me, I have forgotten to explain anything to you. Listen: my brother Karl, by the bankruptcy of one of his partners over the sea, suddenly found his whole fortune compromised. To avoid total ruin, my brother was compelled to embark immediately for the colonies. When he left, he expected to return in a few years; but now he has postponed his return indefinitely, as his business continues to render his absence necessary. He took his two elder daughters with him. To me, too old to go and join him, too old to remain alone, he has given Christine; but I did not desire to possess you, my child, without the possibility of rendering you happy. I asked earnestly permission to marry you to Herbert. You are no longer a rich heiress. The protection of an old man could not last long; your father has consented to all that I asked; he sends you, as a farewell gift, your liberty and permission to marry Herbert. Christine, you are free, and Herbert is awaiting his bride."

The long robes of the novice were slightly agitated as if the limbs which they covered trembled a little; she remained several seconds without speaking, and then answered:

"It is too late; I am the affianced of the Lord!"

William uttered a cry of grief, and looked with

alarm at the motionless young girl who stood before him.

"Christine," he exclaimed, "you —— you no longer love Herbert?"

"I am the affianced of the Lord!" repeated the novice, her hands crossed upon her breast, and her eyes raised towards heaven.

"O my God, my God!" exclaimed William, while the tears rolled down his face, "my brother has killed this child! her soul has been sad *even unto death!* Christine, poor and beloved victim of our severity, tell me what has passed within you during your abode in this convent?"

"I saw others pray—I prayed. There was a great stillness—I was silent; no one wept—I dried my tears; something at first chilly, then soothing, enveloped my soul. The voice of God made itself heard—I listened; I loved the Lord—I gave myself to him."

And then, as if fatigued by so many words, Martha-Mary relapsed into silence, and that absorbing meditation which made her insensible to all that was passing around her. At this moment, the sound of a bell was heard; the novice started, and her eyes sparkled.

"God calls me," she said; "I go to pray."

"How! Christine, my child, will you leave me thus?"

"Do you not hear the bell? it is the hour of prayer."

"But, my daughter, my child, I came to take you hence!"

"I shall never leave the convent. Farewell, uncle," answered Martha-Mary, walking slowly away.

At the moment that she opened the door to leave the parlor, she turned towards William; her eyes were fixed upon him with a sad and sweet expression; her lips moved as if to send him a kiss—and she disappeared.

William made no attempt to detain her; he remained with his head leaning against the grating, and big tears coursed down his cheeks. The bell was still tolling—it seemed to him the funeral knell of his child. William took no note of how long he remained thus overwhelmed by his reflections. The time came when he heard a voice speaking to him; it was the Superior, who enveloped in her black drapery, had just seated herself on the other side of the grating.

"I foresaw your grief," said the Superior. "Our sister, Martha-Mary, is unwilling to accompany you."

"Listen, my son," resumed the Superior, "listen. Five years ago a young girl was brought here on the brink of despair,—full of agitation and trouble; to her the convent seemed her grave. During a

whole year, no one saw her face without seeing that she had been weeping. God alone knows how many tears the eyes must shed before a broken heart can be restored to calm and resignation;—man could not count them. This young girl suffered terribly; in vain we implored mercy for her—in vain we called her family to her assistance. She might say as it is written in the psalm—'*I am weary with my groaning, mine eye is consumed because of grief.*'

"What could we do except pray for her, since no one in this world was willing to resume the charge of this poor child?"

"Alas!" exclaimed William, "your letters never reached us. My brother was beyond the seas, and I, having no hope of being able to induce Karl to change his decision, had left his empty and gloomy house."

"This child was abandoned of men," resumed the Superior; "but God looked upon his servant and brought consolation to her. If he should never restore strength to her body wasted by suffering—his will be done! Perhaps it would be both wise and generous to leave now to this young girl the love of God which has reached her after so many tears; perhaps it would be prudent to spare her any new shock."

"No, no!" exclaimed William, "I cannot give uncomplainingly to God this last scion of my family,

the support of my old age; I will make every effort to awaken the slumbering feelings of her heart. Give me back Christine for a few days only—let her revisit the place where she was born, the spot where she loved—if she will not be persuaded by my entreaties, an order from you will be obeyed; command her to return for a few hours to her father's roof. After this last trial, if such be still her will, I will return her to you."

"Take sister Martha-Mary with you, my son; I will tell her to follow you. If God has truly spoken to her soul, no voice from this world will reach her; should it be otherwise, let her not return to the cloister, and may blessings accompany her wherever she shall go. Farewell, and may the peace of the Lord be with you, my son!"

And the Superior withdrew.

A little hope revived in William Van Amberg's breast; he thought that the threshold of the convent once passed, Christine would recover her former nature, her youth and her love. He thought that he should remove his child forever from those gloomy walls. He was agitated by a feeling of painful impatience. Soon a light step was heard in the corridor adjoining the parlor; William rushed towards the door; Christine was there, no longer separated by the grating from her uncle.

"My beloved Christine," exclaimed William, "at

length I am permitted to take you to my arms and press you to my heart! Come with me! we will return to the old house where we all once used to live together!"

Sister Martha-Mary was paler than at her first interview with William; had her calm face been capable of any expression, perhaps it might have shadowed forth something of sadness. The novice permitted herself to be taken by the hand and led to the door of the convent; but when she had crossed the threshold into the open light and air, she staggered and leaned for support against the outer wall.

The sun at this moment was dispersing the clouds and casting golden rays upon the plain and the hillside; the atmosphere was transparent, and the level, monotonous landscape, was almost vivified into beauty by the glow.

"See, daughter, see," said William to Christine, who continued absorbed in silent reflection; "see how beautiful the earth is! how soft this atmosphere is! how delightful it is to be free, and to be able to move on towards that boundless horizon!"

"O uncle," answered the novice, "how beautiful are the heavens! See how brilliant the sun is over our heads! it is in the heavens that we should admire his rays: they are dimmed and feeble before they reach the earth."

William conducted Christine to the carriage which

was in waiting; he seated himself by her side, and the horses started. The novice's eyes continued for a long time fixed upon the walls of her convent; and when they were hidden from her sight by the windings of the road, she closed her eyes and seemed to be lost in sleep.

During the journey William tried in vain to induce her to converse; she thought, but no longer knew how to express her thoughts; whenever compelled to reply, she seemed overwhelmed by fatigue; she appeared to have no life but an inner one of mystery and silence, having no communication with the outer world. Occasionally, however, she would murmur—

"How long the day is! nothing marks the hours; I have not once heard the bell to-day!"

Pale, motionless, and silent, she journeyed on at William's side, obeying him mechanically; as if a veil had been drawn over her eyes, she neither took notice of the old man's sadness, nor of the country through which they were passing. At length they reached the little house of red brick; the carriage rolled into the court-yard where the grass was already beginning to grow. Gothon came out to meet them.

"Welcome, Mademoiselle," muttered the old servant.

Martha-Mary, leaning upon her uncle's arm, en-

tered the parlor where the Van Amberg family had so often met. The room was deserted and cold; neither books nor work gave it the appearance of being occupied. It seems as if places have a life which they assume or lay aside as we come to them or leave them. Christine slowly crossed this well-known apartment, and sat down upon a chair which had been left by the window which looked upon the meadow. It was there that her mother had lived twenty years—there that her own childhood had been passed at the side of Annunciata.

William opened the window and pointed out to her the lawn, the river, and the willows. Christine looked at them in silence, with her head supported by her hand, and her eyes fixed upon the horizon. William remained a long time by her—he then placed his hand upon Christine's shoulder, and pronounced her name; she arose from her seat. He told her to follow him; she obeyed. They ascended the wooden stairs, crossed the little gallery, and William opened the door.

"Your mother's room!" he said to Christine.

The novice advanced a few steps, and then stood still in the middle of the room; tears flowed from her eyes, she joined her hands and prayed.

"My daughter," said William, "*she* ardently desired your happiness."

"She has obtained her wish," replied the novice.

The old man felt a profound sadness come over him. It was like pressing to his heart a corpse, to which his love restored neither breath nor warmth.

Martha-Mary advanced to her mother's bed, knelt down, and kissed the pillow which had supported Annunciata's dying head.

"Mother, mother," she murmured, "we shall soon meet again!"

William shuddered; he led Christine away, and conducted her to what had so long been her own little room. The bed with its white curtains was still there; the guitar remained hanging against the wall; the books which Christine had loved had not been removed from the shelves of her little book-case. Through the open window were seen the willows and the river; but Martha-Mary looked at none of these. The wooden crucifix was still upon the wall; Christine walked rapidly to it, fell upon her knees, bowed her head upon the feet of Christ, closed her eyes and drew a long breath, like one finding rest after long fatigue. She looked at nothing—neither at this home of her early years, nor the garden where she had so often played, nor the river which had witnessed her love. She remained with her head bowed upon the feet of Christ, like an exile who is restored to his native land, like a sea-tost mariner who has returned to port.

William stood before her in tearful silence. Go-

thon was at a little distance wiping her eyes with her apron. Several hours elapsed. The house-clock struck; the birds sang in the garden; the wind rustled among the trees; the doves cooed in the pigeon-house; the cock crowed in the poultry-yard. All these once loved, familiar sounds, could not divert Martha-Mary from her meditation.

William with overflowing heart left the room, and went down alone to the parlor. He remained there a long time with his head bowed upon his breast, plunged in gloomy reflections, thinking of the objects of his affection which were removed from him forever, and of her, who although near him, was more absent than they. Suddenly hurried steps were heard; a young man entered the room and threw himself into William's arms.

"O Herbert," said the old man, "I was waiting for you."

"Christine! Christine!" cried Herbert; "where is Christine? Am I not dreaming? Is it possible that Mr. Van Amberg has consented to give me Christine? —My country and Christine both restored to me!"

"Karl Van Amberg gives, but God refuses her to you," replied William, mournfully.

William then told Herbert what had passed at the convent, and since they had arrived at the house; he related a thousand details; he repeated them a thou-

sand times without succeeding in making Herbert comprehend the melancholy truth.

"It is impossible!" the student energetically repeated; "if Christine is living, if Christine is here, to the first word uttered by her lover Herbert, Christine will reply."

"God grant it!" exclaimed William; "my only hope now is in you; come, let us go to her."

Herbert rapidly ascended the staircase; his heart was too full of love to have room for much fear. Christine free, was for him Christine ready to become his wife. He rushed to her room, and flung open the door; but as if struck by lightning, the young man paused upon the threshold of that door. The fading light of the dying day fell upon Martha-Mary, whose form stood out like a white shadow from the surrounding gloom. She was still upon her knees, with her head bowed upon the feet of Christ, and her fragile person lost in the folds of her conventual robes.

She heard not the opening of the door.

Herbert gazed upon her for a long time, and a torrent of tears burst from his eyes. William took the young man's hand and pressed it in silence.

"I am frightened," said Herbert in a low tone, "I am frightened! That is not my Christine!—It is a phantom risen from the earth or an angel descended from heaven who has taken her place." ——

"No, it is no longer Christine," replied William sadly.

After a few moments more of mournful contemplation, Herbert exclaimed:

"Christine, dear Christine!"

At the sound of his voice, the novice started, rose to her feet, and answered:

"Herbert!" ——

As in former days, when her lover called:

"Christine!"

Martha-Mary had replied:

"Herbert!"

The young man's heart beat violently; he sprang towards the novice and took her hands.

"It is I, it is Herbert!" he exclaimed, falling upon his knees before her. The novice fixed upon him her large black eyes, gazed for a long time, and a slight flush passed across her brow—she then became pale as before, and said gently to Herbert:

"I never expected to see you again on earth."

"Dear Christine, we have suffered much—wept much; but happy days at last dawn upon us! My love, my betrothed, we will never part again!"

Martha-Mary, extricating her hands from Herbert's, retreated towards the crucifix.

"I am the affianced of the Lord," she murmured in a trembling voice; "he is expecting me."

Herbert uttered a cry of grief.

"O Christine, beloved Christine! recollect our vows, our promises, our love, our tears, our hopes. When you left me, you swore always to love me. Christine, if you would not have me die of despair, remember the past!"

Martha-Mary remained with her eyes fixed upon the crucifix—her hands, convulsively clasped, were extended towards it.

"Lord," she murmured, "speak to his heart, as thou hast spoken to mine; his is a noble heart, worthy to love thee. Stronger than I, Herbert may survive, even after much weeping—be thou his consolation, Lord."

"Christine, my first love! Christine, loved with constancy in absence! Christine, the only blessing, the only hope of my life! can you abandon me thus? Is this heart which was once entirely mine closed to me forever?"

With her eyes turned towards the Christ, and her hands still clasped, the novice, as if able only to speak to her God, gently replied:

"Lord, he suffers as I have suffered! do thou pour upon him the balm with which thou hast cured my wounds! Leaving him life, take his soul as thou hast taken mine. Give him that perfect peace which descendeth unto those whom thou lovest."

"O Christine, my beloved!" exclaimed Herbert, again seizing Martha-Mary's hands, "look upon me,

turn your eyes towards me, see my tears! Dearest treasure of my heart, you seem to slumber—awake! Do you no longer recollect our tender meetings? the willows which bent over the water? my boat, in which we floated all one night dreaming of the happiness of eternal union? See, see!—the moon is rising as it then rose. The evening was lovely, as this evening is. We were side by side as we now are; they separated us—but now we are free to remain together. Christine, have you ceased to love? have you forgotten all?"

William approached her, and took one of her hands.

"My darling child," he said, "we entreat you not to leave us! to you we look for happiness; remain with us, Christine."

The novice, one of her hands in Herbert's, the other in William's, slowly replied in a low tone:

"The corpse that reposes in the tomb does not lift the stone to re-enter the world. The soul which has seen Heaven, does not descend from it to return to earth. The creature to whom God has said: 'Be thou the spouse of Christ,' does not leave Christ to unite herself to a man—and she who is about to die should turn her affections from mortal things."

"Herbert," exclaimed William, "no more! be silent! I can hardly feel the beating of her pulse under my fingers! She seems to me to be even paler

than she was when she appeared to me for the first time behind the grating of the convent; we pain her. Enough, Herbert, enough! Better yield her to God upon earth, than send her to him in Heaven!"

"My daughter," added William, placing Martha-Mary's almost inanimate head upon his shoulder, "my daughter, recover yourself,—you alarm me when you close your eyes so."

And the old man pressed the young girl to his heart, as a mother embraces her child.

"Recover yourself," he repeated; "I will restore you to the house of God."

Martha-Mary fixed her sad and gentle eyes upon her uncle; her hand feebly pressed his, and turning towards Herbert, she said in a scarcely audible voice:

"You, Herbert, you who will live, do not abandon him."

"Christine!" exclaimed Herbert, on his knees before his betrothed; "Christine, are we about to separate forever?"

The novice raised her eyes to heaven.

"Not forever!" she answered.

"Silence, Herbert, speak no more!" exclaimed William. "Let us leave this young girl in peace; Heavenly Father, thy will be done!—Let us bow our heads. O my beloved Christine, cruel has been the experience of your short years. It seems as if you had come upon this earth against the will of God,—

as if he had assigned you no place here, and as if he recals you to himself because he is unwilling that you should remain. When we all abandoned you, God alone came to you; his love is a love which passeth not away. Continue, then, with God!—and in his mercy may he not require you still nearer to him! Farewell, Christine; return in peace to your holy dwelling, and pray for us, my daughter."

A few days afterwards the convent-gates opened to receive Sister Martha-Mary, and this time they were to close upon her forever.

With feeble and unsteady steps the novice traversed the cloisters, and prostrated herself on the steps of the altar. The Superior came to her.

"O, my mother!" exclaimed Christine, the fountain of whose tears was once more opened, and who wept as in the days of her childhood, "I have seen him again, and I have left him!—I am come! Lord —I am come! Faithful to my promise, I await the crown which is to consecrate me as thy spouse. Thy voice henceforward is the only one which will reach my ears! I come to sing thy praises, to pray and to serve thee until the end of my life. My mother, prepare the robe of serge, the white crown, the silver cross which the priest is to give me in the name of Christ: I am ready."

"My daughter," replied the Superior, "you are very ill, very exhausted by so many shocks; do you not prefer to delay the ceremony of your profession?"

"No, my mother! no, do not delay—for I would die the bride of the Lord! and my time is short!" replied Sister Martha-Mary.

RESIGNATION.

Resignation.

I AM going to relate, as simply as possible, something which occurred under my own observation. It is one of the melancholy recollections of my life. It is one of those thoughts to which the mind turns instinctively with a sort of subdued sadness in the hour of discouragement. It is suggestive of a relinquishment of the too eager hopes of this world, and of a self-denial which calms our murmurings and reconciles us to silent resignation.

Should ever these pages be read, I should not wish it to be by those who are happy—completely happy. They contain nothing for them—neither invention nor events. But there are hearts which have suffered a little, dreamed much, and which are easily inclined to sadness. Should they but suspect the existence of suffering in any of its multiform shapes, or should any sound resembling a sigh reach them, they stop to listen and pity. It is to such that I would speak, almost at random, and relate a tale simple in its truth, and touching in its simplicity.

There is situated in the north of France, near the frontier of Belgium, a small, obscure town, which is seldom visited by the traveller. The chances of war have surrounded it with lofty fortifications which seem to crush the slightly constructed houses in the centre. The poor little town is so hedged in by a line of walls, that, since their existence, not a single straggling house has started up on the meadow which surrounds it. With the increase of its population, it has encroached upon its public places, blocked its streets, and sacrificed space, regularity, and comfort. The houses thus piled upon each other, and huddled together within the circuit of the walls, appear from a little distance like one great prison.

The climate of the north of France, although never extremely cold, is cheerless and melancholy enough: dampness, fog, clouds, and snow obscure the sky and oppress the earth six months out of the year. A thick and black charcoal smoke, rising above every dwelling, adds still more to the gloomy appearance of this little town.

I never shall forget my feelings the first time that I crossed the draw-bridges over which you gain admittance to the place. I wondered with a certain sensation of terror, if there could be any beings who were born there, and who would die there without knowing anything of the world outside. And, indeed, there were persons whose destiny was such.

But Providence, whose hidden goodness enters even into the privations which it imposes, has given the inhabitants of this town the necessity of laboring—the need of acquiring larger means—and thus deprived these poor disinherited children of the leisure to observe that their sky is gray and sunless. They forget what they do not possess. But I, on entering this gloomy and smoky town, called up to memory all the sunshiny days which had filled my life, and all the hours which I had spent at liberty, with a pure sky above my head, and open space before me. At this moment I thought of rendering thanks for what I had always previously looked upon as gifts common to all mankind: light, air, and an unobstructed horizon.

I had lived eighteen months in this little town, and was just on the point of growing restless at my long captivity, when the following events occurred:

In order to reach one of the gates of the fortifications, I was compelled, every day, to pass through a little alley which resembled a staircase, steps having been dug into the ground in order to facilitate the descent. As I walked down this narrow and obscure alley, for a long time my thoughts used to precede my steps, and my mind was full of the open country beyond; but one day, by chance, my eyes were attracted by a poor house, the only one which seemed to be occupied. It was composed simply of one

story, with two windows; between these there was a little door; and, above all, a superstructure of sheds. The walls of the house were painted dark gray—the windows contained numberless little panes of a thick and greenish glass. It was impossible for the sunlight to struggle through this obstacle into the interior of the dwelling. Besides, the street was too narrow for the sun ever to shine there at all. There, there was always perpetual shade, and there it was always cold, however warm the day elsewhere.

In winter, when the frozen snow choked up the steps of the little street, it was impossible for any one to walk there without danger of falling: consequently it was a deserted road, which I alone, perhaps, passed over once a day. I do not recollect that I ever met any one there, or that I ever saw a bird alight, for a moment, upon the crevasses of the walls. "I hope," said I to myself, "that this gloomy house is occupied only by persons who have almost reached the limit of life, and who are no longer capable of sadness or of regret. It would be frightful to be young in such a place!"

No sound escaped from the little house—no movement could be seen in it. It was quiet as the grave, and every day I repeated the question to myself: "Who can possibly live here?"

Spring came. The ice in the lane thawed; then the ground dried gradually, and a few blades of

grass sprang up at the foot of the walls. The bit of sky which was just discernible became clearer. At last spring clothed even this obscure by-way with some semblance of life. But the aspect of the little house remained unchanged.

About the beginning of June, as I was taking my accustomed walk, I saw, (pardon the expression,) with a feeling of profound sadness, a little bouquet of violets placed in a glass upon the sill of one of the windows of the house.

"There must be unhappiness there," thought I.

In order to be capable of loving flowers, we must either be young, or at least have retained some of the feelings of youth; we must not be entirely absorbed by mere material existence; we must have the delightful faculty of doing nothing without being idle; that is to say, of dreaming, of recollecting, and of hoping. It requires a certain delicacy of soul to enjoy the perfume of a flower. It is a little of the ideal, a little poetry mingling with the realities of life. When I see those who are doomed to poverty and labor manifest an affection for flowers, I know that a struggle is waging between the necessities of life and the instincts of the soul. I always feel inclined to speak, almost to enter into conversation with him who cultivates a poor flower near the door of his cabin. But that bouquet of violets saddened me; it seemed to say: "Some one lives here who re-

grets the absence of air, of sunshine, and of happiness; some one who appreciates the value of what he is deprived of; some one so poor in pleasures, that even I, the poor bouquet of violets, am a joy to his life."

I grew melancholy as I looked at these flowers; I wondered if the obscurity and cold of the little street would not cause them to fade very soon. I felt an interest in them. I wished that I had the power to preserve them for a long time for him who loved them.

The next day I returned. The flowers had faded, and their discolored petals were drooping. Still there was a little perfume left, and they had evidently been cared for. As I advanced, I remarked that the window was partly open. A ray, I will not say of sunshine, but of daylight, penetrated into the house, and left a gleam of light on the floor of the room; but this only increased the obscurity on both sides, and my eyes were unable to distinguish anything.

The next day after, I passed again; it was almost a summer's day; the birds were all singing—the trees were all beginning to bud—there was the hum of a thousand insects. Everything was full of life and enjoyment.

One of the windows of the little house was entirely open.

I drew near, and saw a woman seated by the window at work. The moment my eyes fell upon her I felt still more sad than the appearance of her dwelling had already made me feel. I could not have told this woman's age. She was no longer very young—she was not pretty, or no longer pretty. She was pale, ill, or sad; it was impossible for me to distinguish. It was certain, however, that her countenance was gentle—that this absence of freshness might as well be occasioned by grief as by years; that this paleness, if it had not saddened the heart, might have possessed a certain charm when contrasted with the raven-blackness of her hair. She was bent over her work; she was either slender or thin. Her hands were white, but somewhat emaciated and the fingers tapering. She wore a brown dress, a black apron, and a small, plain white collar; and the bouquet which had bloomed two days upon the window-sill, she had transferred to her bosom, that she might lose nothing of its last perfume.

She raised her eyes and acknowledged my presence; I saw her better. She was still young, but near the age when youth ceases. She had evidently suffered, but probably without struggling, without murmuring, almost without weeping. Her features were impressed with silence, resignation, and calmness; but it was the calmness which succeeds death. I fancied that she could not have suffered any shock;

that the spark within had flickered a long time and then gone out; that she had not been broken, but bent and bowed until she fell noiselessly to the earth.

This was the story told by the expression of her face and her attitude. There are persons who speak to you with a look, and who, when once seen for a moment, are remembered forever.

I found her every day at the same place. She would bow to me—and after a time she further greeted me with a melancholy and sweet smile. This is all that I was able to see of the life of this woman, who was constantly seated at her window.

On Sunday she never worked. I fancied that she went out that day, for every Monday a little bouquet of violets reappeared on the window-sill. But in a day or two it faded, and was never replaced until after the end of the week. I thought, moreover, that she must be poor, and that she worked secretly for her subsistence; for the materials upon which she embroidered were of the finest and richest, and I never saw anything but the humblest simplicity in her dress. At all events, she was not alone in the house, for one day I heard a somewhat imperious voice call, "Ursula!" and she instantly arose from her seat. The voice did not appear to be that of a master; Ursula had not obeyed as a servant obeys. There was a desire to please manifested in the alacrity with which

she arose, although there was no tone of affection in the voice which addressed her. I fancied that Ursula, perhaps, was not loved by those with whom she lived—that she was even harshly treated by them,—but that in spite of all, with her gentle and melancholy disposition, she had attached herself to them without receiving anything in exchange.

Time wore on, and I became daily more familiar with the existence of poor Ursula. And yet all my means for divining her secrets were confined to passing once a day in front of her open window.

I have already said that she smiled when she saw me; I soon began to pluck flowers during my walk, and one morning I placed them timidly and with some embarrassment upon Ursula's window-sill. She colored, and then smiled more sweetly than usual. Every day, thenceforward, Ursula had a bouquet; gradually I mingled some exotics from my garden with the wild flowers. There were bunches of flowers at the window, and Ursula had flowers in her bosom. There was both spring-time and summer for the little gray house.

It happened that on my returning to town one evening, there came up a shower as I was passing along the narrow lane. Ursula rushed to the door of her dwelling, opened it, took me by the hand, made me come in, and when we were in the hall, in front of the room in which she was accustomed to sit, the

poor girl seized both my hands, and with tears in her eyes, said:

"Thanks!"

It was the first time we had spoken together. I went in.

The room in which Ursula worked had the pretension to be the parlor of the house: the red tiles of the floor were almost freezing to the feet—straw-bottomed chairs were the only seats in the room, the sides of which were ornamented by two old consoles. It was a long, narrow chamber, and being only lighted by the little window upon the street, it was both dark, cold, and damp.

Well might Ursula seat herself by the window in quest of air and light! I at once understood why the poor girl was pale: she was not so because she had lost her freshness, but because she had never possessed any. She was like plants which have grown in the shade.

In one corner of the room, seated in arm-chairs more comfortable than the rest, I saw two persons whom the darkness had at first prevented me from perceiving. They were an old man and a woman almost as aged as himself. This woman was knitting at a distance from the window, without looking at her work; she was blind. The old man was doing nothing: he was gazing before him with a fixed, unintelligent stare. Alas! he had passed the allotted

period of existence, and his body alone was living; at the first glance it was evident that he had fallen into a state of second childhood.

It would almost seem that, when life is unusually prolonged, the soul as if irritated by the unreasonable length of its captivity, endeavors to escape from its prison, and, in its efforts to do so, bursts the bonds which establish harmonious action. It has not yet left its dwelling-place, but it is no longer where it should be.

And this was what the little gray house concealed in its isolation, its silence and its darkness—a blind woman, an imbecile old man, and a poor young girl prematurely faded because her youth had been oppressed and crushed by the broken relics of the past which surrounded her, and by the old walls which held her captive!

Had Ursula only been a person of limited intelligence, an active housekeeper, absorbed by the labors of the day, agitated by trifles, and speaking without any meaning! But she was a melancholy young girl, imaginative, excitable, capable of enjoying a happy life, or of loving even an unhappy one; her soul was an instrument every chord of which was fitted to render sounds of delight; but they had all been condemned to an eternal silence.

Alas! Ursula's lot was a still sadder one than I had imagined when I attributed her paleness and her

apparent depression to some misfortune; there had been nothing in her life—absolutely nothing!

She had seen time sweep away day by day her youth, her beauty, her hopes and her life; and there was nothing, always nothing for her, but silence and forgetfulness!

I returned often to see Ursula, and the following is almost word for word the account of her life which she gave to me one day when I was seated with her by the window:

"I was born in this house, which I have never left; but my family does not belong to this province: we are strangers here, without ties and without friends. My parents were already advanced in life when they married. I have never known them young. My mother became blind. This misfortune threw a gloom upon her disposition; so that the house has always been dull for me—I have never ventured to sing in it. No one has been happy in it; my childhood was passed in silence; I was never permitted to make the slightest noise. I seldom was caressed. My parents, however, loved me, but they never expressed their feelings to me; I judge of their hearts by my own—I know that I loved them, and I infer, consequently, that they loved me. My life has not always been as gloomy as it is at present. I had a sister ———"

Ursula's eyes filled with tears; but she continued.

"I had an elder sister. She was somewhat taciturn, like my mother, but she was kind, gentle and affectionate to me. We were very much attached to each other—we divided between us the charge of our parents. We never enjoyed the pleasure of walking together, there, in the woods, on top of the hill. One of us always remained at the house to take care of our old father; but she who went out always brought back some bunches of violets from the woods, and spoke to her sister of the sunshine, the trees, and the open air. The other while listening almost believed that she herself had been out, and then in the evening we used to work together by the lamp. We could not converse, for our parents were sleeping by our side, but at least, when each raised her eyes she found a smile upon the other's face; then we used to go up together to the same chamber, never falling asleep until each had tenderly repeated several times: 'good night! pleasant slumbers, sister!'

"It was hard that we should be separated. However, I do not murmur; Martha is happy in heaven!

"I know not if it was the want of air and of exercise, or the absence of happiness which produced in Martha the first germs of her illness; but I saw her grow daily weaker, languish and suffer. Alas! it was only I who was uneasy on her account; my mother could not see her, and Martha never complained.

My father was already beginning to enter into the state of insensibility in which he is at present.

"It was only at a very advanced period of her disease that I was able to persuade Martha to call in a physician.

"It was too late for him to be of any service; she lingered a little longer, and then died.

"The evening before her death, she made me sit by her bedside, took one of my hands in her own, which trembled violently, and said:

"'Farewell, my poor Ursula! I have nothing in the world to regret a separation from but you. Keep up your courage, and take good care of our father and our mother; they love us, Ursula, although they do not always say so. Be careful of your health, for their sakes; you must live until they are gone. Farewell, my good sister; do not grieve too much for me; pray often to God—and we shall meet again, Ursula!'

"Three days later Martha was carried away in her coffin, and I remained alone with my parents.

"When I informed my blind mother of my sister's death, she uttered a piercing shriek, and fell upon her knees. I approached her, raised her up, and led her to her arm-chair. Since that moment no cry has escaped her, and she has never wept; the only change in her is that she speaks even less than for-

merly, and I notice the beads of her rosary pass more frequently than ever between her fingers.

"I have but little more to tell. My father fell into a state of complete childishness; we lost a portion of the little fortune which constituted our competence. I wished to conceal it from my parents—there was nothing easier than to deceive them: the one understands nothing, the other sees nothing! I began to embroider and to sell my work secretly. I have no longer any one to converse with since my sister's death. I am fond of reading—but it is impossible for me to read—I must work. I only take the air on Sunday; I never go far, for I am alone.

"Some years ago, when I was younger, I used to indulge in many a reverie as I sat by that window gazing at the heavens. I peopled my solitude with a thousand creations of fancy, which made the time pass somewhat less slowly. At present my thoughts are benumbed; I have no more reveries.

"As long as I continued young and rather pretty, I vaguely hoped for some change in my destiny. I am now twenty-nine years old; and the gloom which surrounds me has done more than time to make me fade. It is all over!—I no longer expect—I no longer hope; I shall finish my days here in the seclusion in which I have hitherto lived.

"You must not believe that I resigned myself at once to this unhappy destiny. No, there were days

when my heart revolted at the idea of growing old without loving. It is possible not to be loved; but not to love, is death! Shall I confess it? I murmured against Providence; I permitted guilty thoughts to enter my mind.

"But this tumult within passed away as did my hopes. I think of Martha's sweet words: 'We shall meet again, sister!' and my only feelings are those of passive resignation, of humble self-sacrifice. I often pray, and I seldom weep now. But tell me, madame, are you happy?"

I made no reply to Ursula's question; to speak of happiness to her had been like speaking of an ungrateful friend to those who are forgotten by him.

As I was leaving home one lovely autumn morning a few months afterwards, to visit Ursula, a young lieutenant of the regiment which garrisoned the little town, called upon me; finding me just going out, he offered me his arm, and we walked together towards Ursula's narrow lane. I accidentally spoke of her, and of the interest which I felt in her; and, as the young officer, whom I shall call Maurice d'Erval, seemed to take pleasure in the conversation, I walked slowly. Before we arrived at the gray house, I had told him all Ursula's story. He looked at her with an expression of interest and pity, bowed and walked away.

Ursula, confused at the presence of a stranger

when she had expected only me, had blushed slightly. I hardly knew if it was in consequence of this momentary animation, or only because I wished it to be so, but the poor girl appeared to me almost pretty.

I cannot tell what vague thoughts passed in my mind: I gazed at Ursula for some time, and then absorbed in my own reflections, without speaking a word, I passed my hand over her hair, and smoothing the bands down further upon her pale cheeks, I took a little velvet ribbon from my own neck, and arranged it around hers, and I placed a few flowers in her bosom. Ursula smiled—why, she knew not. Her smile always pained me; there is nothing so sad as the smiles of the unhappy: they seem to smile for others, and not for themselves.

Many days elapsed before I again saw Maurice d'Erval—many more before accident brought us once more together to the gray house. It was when returning from a delightful excursion made by a party of friends. At the entrance of the town we separated—I took Maurice d'Erval's arm to go to Ursula's. It was quite absurd to do so, but I could not help feeling strangely moved; I ceased conversing, and formed a thousand fanciful projects. It seemed to me impossible that the young officer should not guess my thoughts. I hoped, I almost believed, that he understood the reason of my emotion; but alas! perhaps I

was mistaken—there are so many things which can only be communicated by words!

It was evening—one of those lovely autumn evenings when all is calm and in repose; not a breath of air rustled the leaves on the trees which glowed in the last rays of the setting sun. It was impossible not to yield to the imagination at such a moment, when nature was lulling to slumber all living things, except man, who watched that he might reflect. It was one of those moments when the heart softens, when we become better, and when we are ready to weep without any cause for tears.

I raised my eyes; from the extremity of the lane I caught sight of Ursula. A ray of sunshine glanced from the window and was shining on Ursula's head, imparting to her black hair an unaccustomed lustre. Her eyes lit up with pleasure when she saw me, and she smiled with that melancholy expression which I loved so much. Her long, black, flowing dress concealed her figure completely, except where the belt marked the waist, which was small and graceful. She wore in her bosom a bunch of violets, her favorite flowers.

There was something in Ursula's paleness, in her black dress, in those sad-colored flowers, and in that ray of the setting sun which shone upon her, which accorded harmoniously with the beauty of Nature

that evening, and with the reveries in which we were indulging.

"There is Ursula!" I said to Maurice d'Erval, calling his attention to the low window of the little house.

He looked at her, and then walked on with his eyes fixed upon her. His gaze disconcerted the poor girl, who was as timid as a child of fifteen, and when we came up to her, her complexion was all in a glow. Maurice d'Erval stopped, exchanged a few words with us, and then left. But thenceforward he was in the habit of coming to town through Ursula's lane, and he would exchange greetings with her. At length one day he went into the house with me.

There are hearts which have so long ceased to hope that they are no longer able to comprehend any good fortune when it happens to them. Enveloped in her melancholy and in her discouragement as in a thick veil which hid the outer world from her, Ursula saw nothing, made no conjectures, and continued unmoved by anything. She remained in Maurice's presence as she had been in mine, crushed and resigned.

As to Maurice, I could not comprehend precisely what was passing in his heart. He was not in love—at least I think not; but the pity with which Ursula inspired him amounted to affection and devotion. This young man, somewhat dreamy and impressible,

loved the atmosphere of melancholy which surrounded Ursula. He came to her to complain of life, to express his skepticism upon the subject of happiness, to speak of nothing but disappointments, without perceiving that by this interchange of sadness there exhaled from these two hearts, both still young, a gentle sympathy which resembled the very happiness whose existence they denied.

Finally, after the expiration of several months more, as we were walking one evening in the midst of the uncultivated moor on the verge of a forest, at a short distance from our common friends, Maurice said to me:

"Does not the most positive happiness in this world consist in making others happy? Is there not in the joy which we communicate an ineffable delight to ourselves? Is it not a lot preferable to the most brilliant destinies, to devote ourselves to one who, without us, would only have have known the tears of life? Is it not a worthy ambition to desire to implant new life in a dying heart?"

I looked anxiously in his face. A tear was glistening in his eye.

"Yes!" he said; "ask Ursula if she is willing to become my wife!"

An exclamation of joy was my answer, and I hastened towards the poor girl's dwelling.

When I reached it, she was as usual seated at

work, her faculties apparently benumbed. Solitude, the absence of all sounds, and the vacancy of her existence, had really stupefied her mind. This was one of the first bounties which she had received from her Maker. She no longer suffered. Others might compassionate the stagnation of a life which had not had its share of activity and youth.

She smiled when she saw me. This was the greatest effort of which her poor paralyzed heart was capable. I was not afraid to administer a violent shock to all this diseased organization, and to excite it suddenly by the communication of unexpected happiness; I was anxious to ascertain if there was any latent life left, or if it was all entirely extinguished.

I seated myself in a chair in front of her, took her two hands in mine, and fixing my eyes upon hers, said:

"Ursula, Maurice d'Erval has requested me to ask you if you are willing to become his wife."

The effect upon the young girl was like the bursting of a thunderbolt: her eyes instantly filled with tears, and yet flashed through their watery veil; her blood, which had so long ceased to flow, resumed its course, diffused over her whole person a roseate hue, and tinged her cheeks with a brilliant crimson; her bosom swelled, and she gasped for breath; her heart beat violently, and her hands pressed mine convul-

sively. Ursula had only been benumbed, and animation was returning.

Instantaneously Ursula felt that she loved; perhaps she had been loving some time secretly to herself and to others; but at this moment, the veil was torn off, and she perceived her love.

After a few minutes she pressed her hand upon her forehead, and said in a low voice:

"No, it is impossible!"

All I did was to repeat: "Maurice d'Erval has requested me to ask you if you are willing to become his wife," that I might accustom Ursula to this combination of words, which like harmonious notes that blend in a chord, formed for the young girl an unknown melody.

"His wife!" she repeated in ecstasy, "his wife!"

And darting to her mother's chair, she said:

"Do you hear, mother? he asks me to become his wife!"

"My daughter," answered the old blind woman, endeavoring to find Ursula's hand, "my beloved daughter, God was sure, sooner or later, to reward your virtues."

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed Ursula, "what do I hear? *His wife! My beloved daughter!*"

And she fell upon her knees, her hands clasped, and her countenance bathed in tears.

At this moment a step was heard in the little corridor.

"It is he!" exclaimed Ursula. "O gracious heavens!" she added, placing both her hands upon her heart, "this is life at last!"

I went out by a side door, and left Ursula alone, beautiful in her tears, in her agitation, and in her happiness, to receive Maurice d'Erval.

Thenceforward Ursula was completely changed. She became animated, and grew young under the fostering influence of happiness. She recovered far more than the beauty which had departed: there was a certain inward radiance which gave her face an indefinable expression of latent joyfulness. Her happiness accorded harmoniously with her former nature; it was thoughtful, quiet, calm, elevated, and imaginative. So that Maurice, who had fallen in love with a woman removed from the glare of day, pale and disenchanted with life, had no change to make in the colors of the picture which had captivated his fancy, when Ursula became happy.

They passed long evenings together in the little first-story parlor, with no other light than the moon's rays, which slanted in through the open window. They conversed a little, gazed much in each other's eyes, and indulged in a thousand pleasing reveries.

Ursula's love was child-like and simple. She would say to Maurice:

"I am happy; I love you; I thank you."

Their happiness required neither sunshine, nor open air, nor space. The little gray house was its only witness. Ursula continued to work constantly, and to remain near her parents. But if her body remained unchangeably in the same place as before, her spirit had fled, free, reanimate, and joyful; the walls of her narrow home could no longer contain it; it had taken its flight. Thus the sweet magic of hope not only gilds the future, but even takes possession of the present, and by its all-powerful prism changes the aspect of everything. This poor house was as dull and gloomy as it had been for twenty years past. But a new-born feeling in a woman's heart had converted it into a palace! O, the dreams of hope! even if always destined to pass away like the golden clouds of the sky, still let them traverse this mortal life! He who has never known them, is a thousand times poorer than he who regrets that they are gone!

This was indeed a happy time for Ursula.

One day Maurice entered the little parlor and said to his betrothed:

"My beloved, let us hasten our marriage; my regiment is about to march: we must be married, that you may accompany me."

"Are we going far, Maurice?"

"Are you alarmed, dearest Ursula, at the thought

of seeing other lands, another part of the world? There are fairer lands than this."

"It is not for myself, Maurice, but for my parents; they are very old to undertake a long journey!"

Maurice stood motionless before Ursula. Notwithstanding that the thick veil which happiness spreads before the eyes had prevented Maurice from reflecting, he nevertheless knew that Ursula in order to participate in his wandering fortunes must separate herself from her parents. He had foreseen her grief; but, confiding in the affection with which he had inspired her, he felt sure that this devoted love would have the power to alleviate all sorrow of which he he himself was not the object. It had become necessary at last to open Ursula's eyes to the future. And grieving at the inevitable pain which he was about to inflict on his betrothed, Maurice took her hand, led her to her accustomed seat, and said to her:

"My love, it is impossible that your father and mother should follow us in our wandering life!—Hitherto, Ursula, we have loved and wept together; we have dreamed away life, without considering any question connected with its positive details. The time has come to speak of our future. My love, I have no fortune but my sword. Being as yet only in the lowest grade of my profession, my pay amounts to but a few hundred francs. Consequently we

shall both be compelled to practice the strictest economy. I have relied upon your courage. But you alone can accompany me. The presence of your parents would reduce us to positive want; we should not even have bread to eat!

"Leave my father and mother!" exclaimed Ursula.

"Leave them here with the small means which they possess; place them in the charge of trustworthy persons, and follow your husband."

"Leave my father and mother!"—Ursula repeated; "are you ignorant that the little which they possess is insufficient for their support? that, in order to pay the rent of this miserable dwelling, I work without their knowledge? that for twenty years past, I alone have tended them?"

"My poor Ursula," resumed Maurice, "we must submit to what is inevitable. You have concealed from them the loss of their little fortune; inform them of it now, since it has became necessary to do so. Let them adapt their mode of living to what they have left; for, alas! my love, we have nothing to give them."

"Leave without them!—it is impossible! I have told you that I am compelled to work for them!"

"Ursula, my Ursula!" resumed Maurice, pressing the poor girl's hands, "I beseech you, do not permit yourself to be led astray by the impulses of your

generous heart; reflect—consider our circumstances dispassionately. We do not refuse to give; we have nothing to give. We can only live by ourselves—and only at all because we are determined to suffer courageously."

"I cannot leave them!" sobbed Ursula.

"Do you not love me, Ursula?" said Maurice to his betrothed.

The poor girl's only reply was a torrent of tears.

Maurice remained a long time with her. He spoke to her a thousand words of affection; he explained to her over and over again their position, brought the conviction to her mind that she had dreamed of an impossibility, entered into the details of the future existence of her parents, and then left her. She had let him speak on without answering him.

Ursula, as soon as she was alone, leaned her head upon her hand and remained in this position several hours. Alas! the tardy happiness which had cast a momentary gleam upon her life was vanishing! Bright dreams, those friends of every youthful heart, which had been so long absent from her, had only returned to abandon her once more! Forgetfulness, silence and obscurity, were resuming possession of her existence, which had been for a moment disputed to them by happiness.

Thus the night wore on. What passed in the poor

girl's mind, God alone knows—none ever heard from her.

At the first dawn of day she arose with a shudder, closed the window which had remained open all night, and pale, chilled, and trembling with emotion, took pen and paper and wrote:

"Farewell, Maurice! I must remain with my father and mother. They require my care and my labor. It would kill them, if I abandoned them in their old age. They have nothing left in the world but me. My sister, on her death-bed confided them to me and said to me: 'We shall meet again, Ursula!' I never should see her again, if I did not fulfil my duties.

"I have loved you well! I shall ever continue to love you! My life shall be devoted to the recollection of you. You have been kind and generous; but, alas! we are too poor to marry. I felt this yesterday—Farewell!—it requires all my courage to write that word!—I hope that your life will be a happy one. Some other woman, more fortunate than I, will love you—it is so easy to love you! Nevertheless, do not ever entirely forget poor Ursula. Farewell, dearest! I knew too well that my lot could never be a happy one!

"URSULA."

I hasten to the conclusion of this tale. Ursula

saw Maurice again. She saw me too. But all our prayers and supplications were thrown away; she would never consent to leave her parents.

"I must work for them!" she said. In vain did I speak to her of Maurice's love, of his happiness in her. In vain, with a sort of cruelty, did I remind her of her age, of the improbability of her again finding an opportunity to change her situation. She wept while listening to me, moistening with her tears the work which she was unwilling to interrupt; and then, with her head bowed upon her breast, she repeated in a low voice:

"It would kill them; I must work for them!"

She insisted that her mother should not be informed of what had occurred. Those for whom she sacrificed herself never knew it. Some explanation, untrue but kindly-intentioned, was given to them of the causes of the rupture of their daughter's marriage. Ursula resumed her place at the window, recommenced her embroideries, and continued to work unceasingly, motionless, pale, and broken.

Alas! Maurice d'Erval had one of those judicious and reasonable minds which assign limits even to devotion, and which are incapable of undertaking sublime follies. His heart, like his reason, admitted the existence of impossibilities. If his marriage with Ursula could have been accomplished without obstacles, perhaps she might have believed until death in

the *unbounded* love of her husband. There are affections which require an easy road. But a barrier to be surmounted intervened like a fatal test. A glare of light revealed to Maurice's own eyes the extent of his love: he saw its limits!

Maurice entreated, wept long, at length became discouraged and offended, and withdrew.

One day, while Ursula was seated at her window, she heard military music in the distance, and the heavy-measured tread of marching men. It was the regiment departing with its band at its head. The clarion notes, like a melancholy farewell, echoed and then died upon the ear in the lane in which Ursula dwelt. She trembled violently as she listened. The music, at first loud and near, gradually became softened in the distance. And then, from afar off, it only reached her like an uncertain murmuring; then, from time to time, the wind alone brought to her an isolated sound; and then, at last, complete silence succeeded. The final hope of Ursula's life seemed borne away with the retreating strains—it became more and more distant until it expired with them!

The poor girl dropped her embroidery upon her knees, and hid her face in her hands. A few tears escaped from between her fingers. She remained in this position as long as the sound of the steps and of the music could be heard; then she resumed her work—she resumed it for the rest of her life!

The evening which succeeded this day of eternal separation—this day when the great sacrifice was consummated—Ursula, after having bestowed upon her parents the attentions which she never omitted, seated herself at the foot of her mother's bed, and, leaning over, fixed her eyes, dimmed with tears, upon her. Taking her hand gently, the poor abandoned one murmured in a voice choked with emotion:

"Mother! you love me, do you not? My presence is a consolation to you? My attentions are grateful to you, are they not, mother? It would pain you if I should leave you?"

The blind woman turned her head towards the wall, and said:

"Ursula, Ursula, I am tired; do not disturb my rest!"

The word of affection which she had solicited as the only recompense of her self-sacrificing devotion, was not spoken. The old blind woman pushed aside the hand which her daughter extended to her, and fell asleep. But between the two green serge curtains of the alcove there was a wooden crucifix blackened by time. Ursula stretched her poor hands, which no earthly friend was willing to press, towards her God, and falling upon her knees by the side of her blind mother's bed, she continued for a long time in prayer.

Thenceforward Ursula became paler, more silent,

and more motionless than ever. These new tears swept away the last traces of her youth and her beauty. She grew old in a few days. It was impossible for her now to attract another suitor; but had it been otherwise, Ursula would not have desired to do so! "It is all over," was an expression of which she had already made use; this time it was unhappily true: it was all over for her!

Nothing more was heard of Maurice d'Erval. Ursula had pleased him, like a graceful and melancholy picture which had touched his heart; with distance, the colors of the picture became fainter, and at last entirely effaced. He forgot!

Alas! how many things there are which we are in the habit of forgetting in this life! Since, in many hearts love becomes extinguished by the habit of daily communication, why, at least, should not those who are separated continue to regret?

A year after these events had transpired, Ursula's mother fell ill. Her malady was one incapable of cure; her life passed away without pain or suffering. Ursula watched and prayed by her mother's bedside, and received her last breath with her farewell blessing.

Then she fell upon her knees at her father's feet. She made him put on his mourning garments without his appearing to take any notice of what she was doing; but on the second day after the death of the

poor blind woman, when they had removed the arm-chair in which she had been so many years accustomed to sit by her husband's side, the old man turned towards the vacant place and called his wife.

Ursula spoke to him, and endeavored to divert his attention; but he repeated the call, while the tears rolled down his cheeks.

In the evening, Ursula brought him his food; but he turned away his head, and in a mournful voice, with his eyes fixed upon the vacant place, again called her who was never to answer him more.

Ursula, in despair, attempted everything which her grief and love suggested. The idiotic old man, leaning over towards the spot where the arm-chair used to be, and, refusing all food, with hands clasped like a beseeching child, continued to ask Ursula for his wife.

A month afterwards he died. In his last moments, when the minister of God was endeavoring to draw his thoughts towards his Creator, and imagined, for an instant, that he had succeeded in reviving his extinct faculties, the old man joined his hands together, and looked up to heaven; and once more he called his wife, as if he saw her spirit floating in the air above him.

When her father's coffin was being carried out of the little gray house, Ursula could not help murmuring:

"Heavenly father, I had merited that they should not be taken from me so soon!"

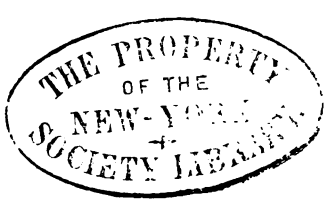
And Ursula remained alone forever.

All this happened many years ago.

I left the little town of —— and Ursula. I travelled. A thousand events occurred to me subsequently without effacing from my memory the story of this poor girl. But Ursula, with her heart incapable of consolation, grew weary of writing to me. After vain efforts to induce her to continue the correspondence, I lost all traces of her.

What has become of her? Is she still living or is she dead?

Alas! fortune never favored the poor girl; I fear that she is still alive!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THE VILLAGE DOCTOR.

The Village Doctor.

"Good heavens! what is this?" exclaimed at the same time several persons who were assembled together in the dining-room of the Chateau de Burcy.

The Countess de Moncar had just inherited by the death of a very distant and not very much lamented relative, an old chateau, with which she was entirely unacquainted, although it was situated not more than fifteen leagues from her usual summer residence. Madame de Moncar, one of the most elegant, and almost one of the prettiest women of Paris, had no particular affection for the country. Leaving the capital at the end of June to return at the beginning of October, she was accompanied to the Morvan by some of the lady companions of her winter pleasures, and some young gentlemen selected from among her most devoted partners in the dance. Madame de Moncar was married to a man much older than herself, and who did not always give her the protection

of his presence. Without taking too great advantage of her liberty, she was a graceful coquette, an elegant trifler, whom it required but a compliment, a civil word, the success of an hour, to make perfectly happy, and who was fond of inspiring love that she might always have an adorer at her side, to pick up the flower which fell from her bouquet; and when some of her lofty connexions remonstrated seriously with her, she would reply:

"Why should I not laugh and take life gaily? It is a less dangerous course than to remain in solitude, listening to the beatings of my own heart! As for me, I hardly know that I have a heart."

The truth is, that the Countess de Moncar hardly knew herself what to think upon this subject. The most important thing for her was to leave this point in doubt all her life, and she considered it prudent not to give herself time to reflect upon the matter.

One delightful September morning she started with her guests for the unknown chateau with the intention of spending the morning there. They took a cross road which was represented as being passable, and as reducing the journey to twelve leagues. This road proved to be as bad as possible: they lost their way in the woods, and one carriage broke down; and, after all, it was not until about midday that our travellers, dying with fatigue, and by no means impressed by the picturesque beauties of the

route, reached the Chateau de Burcy, the aspect of which promised but little compensation for what they had undergone.

It was a large building with blackened walls. In front of the entrance, a kitchen garden, not at that time in cultivation, was continued from terrace to terrace—for the chateau was built upon the side of a wooded hill, and had no level ground around it; rocky mountains dominated it on every side, and the trees, which sprung up from between the rocks, were covered with dark and gloomy foliage. The establishment appeared as deserted as its location was wild. Madame de Moncar stood spell-bound upon the threshold of her old chateau.

"This does not resemble much a party of pleasure," she said. "I feel almost disposed to cry at the sight of this desolate place. However, here are some fine trees, some huge rocks, and a roaring torrent: there is a certain beauty in all this, perhaps; but it is too serious for me," she continued with a smile. "Let us go in and examine the interior."

"Yes, let us see if the cook, who started yesterday as an advance guard, has arrived more fortunately than we have done," answered her hungry companions.

It was soon ascertained that an abundant breakfast would be shortly ready, and the interval was occupied in a ramble through the chateau. The old

articles of furniture enveloped in worn-out covers, the arm-chairs with but three legs left, the shaky tables, the discordant sounds of a piano forgotten and left there some twenty years, furnished matter for a thousand jests. Gaiety reappeared.

It was unanimously determined to laugh at the inconvenience of everything. Besides, for this party of young and idle people the day was quite an event, almost an expedition of peril, the originality of which was beginning to tell upon the imagination. A fagot has been lighted in the great fire-place in the parlor; but the gusts of smoke which escaped in every direction, had driven all the guests into the garden. The appearance of this garden was singular; the stone benches were covered with moss; the terrace walls which had fallen in many places, had left room between the imperfectly joined stones for numberless wild plants, some of which grew up straight and lofty, while others crawled upon the earth like flexible vines; the paths were covered with grass; the beds reserved for cultivated flowers had been invaded by wild ones which spring spontaneously wherever heaven sends a drop of rain or a ray of sunshine; the white bind-weed surrounded and choked the monthly roses; wild mulberries were interspersed with red currants; fern, sweet-scented mint, and thistles armed with threatening prickles, grew confusedly among a few forgotten lilies. The moment that our travellers en-

tered the enclosure, thousands of creeping things, alarmed at the unusual noise, escaped in the grass, and the birds left their nests and flew from branch to branch. The silence which had so long reigned in this quiet spot, gave place to the noise of voices and joyous bursts of laughter. This solitude was a mystery to all; to none was it suggestive of reflection. It was disturbed and profaned without respect. Each of the party had some episode to relate connected with the most delightful evenings of the past winter. A mutual exchange was made of flattering allusions, of expressive looks, of hidden compliments; in a word, of those numberless nothings which make up the conversation of those who endeavor to please before they have acquired the right to be serious.

The butler, after searching in vain through the galleries of the chateau for a bell, finally determined to notify the guests by calling from the garden steps that breakfast was ready. The smile with which he performed this duty indicated that, like his mistress, he resigned himself, for that day, to the absence of etiquette, and the usual proprieties of the household. The guests rushed laughingly to table. They forgot the old chateau, the desert in which it was situated, and the gloom which surrounded it; all talked at the same time, and they drank the health of the hostess, or rather of the fairy whose single presence converted

this ruinous old pile into an enchanted castle. Suddenly every eye was turned towards the windows of the dining room.

"What is this?" they asked.

The object that attracted their attention was a little gig with large wheels, as high as its wicker-work body, which passed in front of the chateau, and drew up at the door. It was drawn by a small gray horse, whose eyes seemed to be threatened by the shafts which pointed upwards at a considerable angle from the front of the vehicle. The hood was raised, so that nothing could be seen within except two arms covered with the sleeves of a blue blouse, and a whip which tickled the gray horse's ear.

"Good gracious! ladies," exclaimed Madame de Moncar, "I forgot to inform you that I felt myself absolutely compelled to invite to our breakfast the village doctor, an old man who formerly rendered many services to the family of my relative, and whom I have met once or twice; do not be afraid of our new guest—he is but little given to talking. After a few words of politeness, we will act precisely as though he were not here; besides, I do not imagine that he will be disposed to prolong his visit."

At this moment the door of the dining-room opened, and Doctor Barnabé walked in. He was a little old man, very feeble and frail, but with a re-

markably gentle and calm expression of countenance. His white hair was tied behind his head in a queue, after the olden fashion. There was a little powder on his temples and on his wrinkled forehead. He wore a black coat, and breeches ornamented with steel buckles. On one of his arms hung a wadded surtout of snuff-colored silk. In his other hand he carried a large cane and a hat. Everything about the village doctor's dress indicated that he had taken special pains that day with his toilet; but his black stockings and his coat were covered with splashes of mud, as if the poor old man had met with a fall into some ditch on the road-side. He stood still at the threshold of the door, surprised at the presence of so numerous a company. The traces of a slight embarrassment appeared for a moment upon his face; he then recovered himself, and bowed without speaking. At the entrance of this singular figure, the guests were seized with a great desire to laugh, which they suppressed more or less successfully. Madame de Moncar alone, as mistress of the house, was unwilling to be deficient in politeness, and kept her countenance.

"Good heavens! doctor, have you been upset?" she asked.

Doctor Barnabé, before answering, glanced at all the young faces around him, and notwithstanding his apparent simplicity, could not possibly avoid no-

ticing the hilarity which his appearance occasioned. He answered quietly:

"I have not been upset. A poor wagoner fell under the wheels of his cart; as I was passing by, I assisted him up."

And the doctor seated himself in the only empty chair at the table. He took his napkin, unfolded it, passed one end through the button-hole of his coat, and spread the rest over his breast and his lap.

At this proceeding many of the guests smiled, and something like stifled laughter broke the silence. This time the doctor did not even raise his eyes. Very likely he noticed nothing.

"Is there much sickness in the village?" asked Madame de Moncar, while the newly-arrived guest was being served.

"Yes, Madame, a good deal."

"Is the neighborhood, then, unhealthy?"

"No, Madame."

"What, then, is the occasion of so much sickness?"

"The great heat during harvest-time, and the cold and dampness in winter."

One of the guests, with an affectation of seriousness, joined in the conversation.

"Then, sir, in this healthy country people are ill all the year round?"

The doctor raised his little gray eyes to the person

who addressed him, looked him in the face, hesitated, and seemed to be either endeavoring to keep back or to find a reply. Madame de Moncar kindly came to his rescue.

"I know," she said, "that you are here the Providence of all that suffer."

"Oh, you are too good!" answered the old man.

And he seemed to be entirely absorbed by a slice of paté to which he had just helped himself.

Doctor Barnabé was then left to himself, and the conversation resumed its course.

If the eyes of any present happened to fall accidentally upon the quiet old man, some slight sarcasm upon him was slipped into the conversation of the moment, and was supposed to pass unnoticed by the subject of it.

This was not because these young gentlemen and ladies were not habitually polite and good-natured; but that day, the journey, the excitement of the breakfast, their meeting, and the laughter which had commenced with the events of the day, had all combined to produce an unreasonable gaiety; a communicative spirit of raillery, which rendered them merciless to the victim with which chance provided them. The doctor appeared to be eating unconcernedly, without raising his eyes, listening or speaking; they took him to be both deaf and dumb, and proceeded to finish their breakfast without constraint.

When they arose from table, Doctor Barnabé drew back a few steps, leaving each gentleman to select the lady whom he wished to lead to the parlor. One of Madame de Moncar's companions remaining without escort, the village doctor advanced timidly towards her and offered her not his arm but his hand. The young lady's fingers were scarcely touched by those of the doctor, who bending slightly in token of respect, advanced with slow and measured steps towards the parlor. This proceeding provoked new smiles, but the old man's face remained so cloudless that they declared that he must be blind as well as deaf and dumb.

Dr. Barnabé, after leaving his companion, sought the smallest and plainest chair in the parlor. He pushed it to one side, at a distance from all the company, seated himself in it, placed his cane between his knees, crossed his hands upon its head, and leaned his chin upon his hands. In this meditative position he remained in silence, and from time to time he closed his eyes as if a gentle sleep which he neither courted nor avoided were upon the point of overpowering his senses.

"Madame de Moncar," exclaimed one of the party, "I presume that it is not your intention to inhabit these ruins and this desert?"

"No,—I have no such intention; but there are high rocks and wild woods here. Monsieur de Mon-

car might be tempted to come here in the shooting season to spend some months."

"But then it would become necessary to tear down and rebuild."

"Let us make a plan," exclaimed the young countess; "let us go out and trace upon the ground the future garden of my domains."

This pleasure party seemed to be fated to be unlucky. At this very moment a heavy cloud burst, and a fine close rain began to fall. It was consequently impossible to leave the parlor.

"Good gracious! What shall we do?" resumed Madame de Moncar; "the horses require several hours of rest. It is evident that the rain will continue sometime. The grass which grows all around is so wet that it will be out of the question to walk upon it for a week to come; all the strings of the piano are broken. There is no such thing as a book anywhere within ten leagues. This parlor is cold and gloomy enough to kill one—what shall we do?"

In truth, the party, just now almost boisterously cheerful, were beginning to lose insensibly their gaiety. Giggling and laughter were succeeded by silence. All approached the windows to look at the sky, which was dark and covered with clouds. All hope of a walk was abandoned. They seated themselves as comfortably as circumstances would permit upon the old articles of furniture. An effort was

made to renew the conversation; but there are thoughts which require, like flowers, a little sunshine. All these young heads seemed to bow, beaten down by the storm, like the poplars in the garden, which were rocking in the breeze. An hour was passed anything but pleasantly.

The hostess, somewhat discouraged at the failure of her party of pleasure, leaning languidly against the balcony of a window, was looking idly at what was before her.

"You see there upon the hill," she said, "a little white house; I shall have it torn down; it interrupts the view."

"The white house!" exclaimed the doctor.

For more than an hour, Doctor Barnabé had remained motionless on his chair. Joy, *ennui*, sunshine and rain, had all come in succession, without provoking a single word from him. His presence was completely forgotten; so that when he uttered the three words, "the white house!" every eye suddenly turned towards him.

"What interest do you take in that house, doctor?" asked the countess.

"Good heavens! Madame, act as though I had not spoken. It will be torn down, undoubtedly, since such is your pleasure."

"But why would you regret the absence of such a tumble-down structure?"

"Because—dear me—because it was once occupied by persons whom I loved—and—"

"They expect to return to it, doctor?"

"They died long ago, madame—they died when I was young."

And the old man glanced sadly at the white house which stood on the hill-side surrounded by woods, like a daisy in the midst of the grass.

There succeeded a momentary pause.

"Madame," whispered one of our travellers in Madame de Moncar's ear; "Madame, there is some mystery here. See how solemn our Esculapius has become. Some pathetic drama has been enacted there; some youthful love adventure, perhaps. Ask the doctor to tell us the story."

"Yes! yes!" was repeated in a low tone on every side; "the story! a tale! a tale! And if interest is wanting, we shall have at least the eloquence of the orator to amuse us."

"Not so, gentlemen!" answered in a whisper Madame de Moncar; "if I request Doctor Barnabé to tell us the story of the white house, it is upon the express condition that nobody will laugh."

Everybody having promised to be serious and polite, Madame de Moncar approached Monsieur Barnabé.

"Dear doctor," she said, "see what dreadful weather we have! how gloomy everything is! You are

the eldest of us all—tell us some story! Make us forget the rain, the fog, and the cold."

Monsieur Barnabé looked at the countess with an expression of great astonishment.

"There is no story," he said; "What occurred in the white house is very simple, and is interesting only to me who was attached to these young people; strangers would not call it a story. And besides, I can neither speak nor narrate at length to listeners. Still more, what I have to tell is sad, and you have come here for amusement."

The doctor again leaned his chin upon his cane.

"Dear doctor," resumed the countess, "the white house shall stand untouched, if you will tell us why you love it."

The old man appeared somewhat moved; he crossed and recrossed his legs, took out his snuff-box and returned it to his pocket without opening it, and then looking the countess in the face, and pointing with his thin and trembling hand to the building in the distance, said:

"You will not tear it down?"

"I promise you that I will not."

"Well! so be it, then! I will do it for their sake; I will save the house which witnessed their happiness. Ladies," continued the old man, "I am no speaker; but I believe that the poorest talker can make himself understood when he relates what he has himself

seen. I warn you, that this story is not a gay one. A musician is called in to sing and dance—a physician when there is sickness, and death is approaching."

A circle was formed around Doctor Barnabé, who, keeping his hands crossed upon the head of his cane, began the following story, surrounded by his audience who were quite prepared to amuse themselves at his expense:

"It was a very long time ago, when I was young—for I too have been young. Youth is a fortune common to all—to the rich as well as to the poor—but which remains in the hands of no one. I had just passed my examination; I had been admitted to practice, and perfectly convinced that by my agency death was to be driven from earth, I returned to my native village for the exercise of my great talents. The village is not far from here. From the window of my little bedroom, I could see that side of the white house which is opposite to the one upon which you are now looking. My village would very certainly not appear in your eyes particularly beautiful. To me it seemed magnificent; I was born there, and I loved it. Every one sees what he loves through a colored medium. God permits us to be occasionally blind; for he well knows that it is not always an advantage in this world to see things in their true light. The place seemed to me, then, agreeable and cheer-

ful; I could live there perfectly happy. The aspect of the white house, however, every time that on rising I threw open my blinds, impressed me disagreeably; it was always closed, noiseless and gloomy, like a thing abandoned of men. I had never seen the windows opened, the door unbolted, or the garden gate swing on its hinges to give admittance to inhabitant or guest. Your relative, who did not know what to do with a cottage by the side of his chateau, endeavored to let it; but the price was rather high, and there was no one among us sufficiently rich to pay it.

"I hoped, however, that a tenant would be found —a good roof, thought I, which shelters no head, is so much lost. After awhile, I noticed daily some change in the appearance of the place. Boxes of flowers were tastefully placed against the walls to relieve their nakedness; flower-beds were traced out in front of the entrance; the walks were cleared of weeds and gravelled, and muslin curtains as white as snow glittered in the sun's rays when they fell upon the windows. At last, one day, a travelling carriage, after rolling through the village, drew up in front of the little house. Who could these strangers be? No one knew; but every one in the village was dying to find out. For a long time nothing was known outside of what was going on in the cottage; we only saw the roses bloom and the grass grow

green. Many were the commentaries made upon the mystery! At one time it was supposed that a party of adventurers were concealed there; at another, that the occupants were a young man and his mistress; in short, everything was surmised except the truth. Truth is so simple that we do not always think of it; as soon as the mind is put in action, it searches right and left, and never thinks of looking directly before it. As for me, I troubled myself very little about the matter. Whoever is there, thought I, they belong to our common race, and consequently, cannot continue long without illness, and I shall be sent for. I waited patiently.

"As I had expected, one day a messenger was sent to say to me that Mr. William Meredith ... ired to see me. I immediately put on my holiday suit, and endeavoring to assume a gravity becoming my profession, I walked through the village, with a full sense of my importance. There were many who envied me. People came to their doors to see me pass. 'He is going to the white house' was whispered about. I walked leisurely, avoiding the appearance of a vulgar curiosity, bowing to my neighbors, the peasants, and saying to them; 'I shall see you again, my friends, I shall see you later in the day—this morning I am busy:' and thus I went on until I reached the house there on the hill-side. When I entered the parlor of this mysterious dwell-

ing, I was delighted with the spectacle before me. The best ornament of the room consisted of flowers; they were so artistically arranged that gold could not have better adorned the interior of this cottage: curtains of white muslin at the windows, and arm-chairs covered with white gingham—this was all; but there were roses and jasmins, and flowers of all sorts as in a garden. The light came softened through the curtains, the air was filled with the fragance of flowers, and a young girl or a young woman reclining upon a sofa, as fair and fresh as everything that surrounded her, received me with a smile. A handsome young man, who was seated upon an ottoman by her side, arose when Doctor Barnabé was announced.

"'Sir,' he said to me with a very decided foreign accent, 'so much is said here of your scientific attainments that I expected to see an old man.'

"'Sir,' I answered, 'I have studied seriously; I am fully convinced of the responsibility and importance of my profession; you can have confidence in me.'

"'Very well,' he said, 'I place my wife under your charge. Her present situation requires both advice and precautions. She was born at a distance from here; she left family and friends to follow me. I have only my affection, but no experience, to enable me to nurse her. I rely upon you, sir; if it is possible, preserve her from all suffering.'

"While speaking these words the young man looked at his wife with an expression so full of love that her large blue eyes glistened with tears of gratitude. She dropped the little cap which she was embroidering, and pressed her husband's hand in both her own. There was every reason for me to think their lot one worthy of being envied; but somehow I did not think so. I felt sad, but could not tell why. I had often, on seeing people weep, said, 'They are happy!' I saw William Meredith and his wife smile, and could not prevent myself from thinking that they had troubles of their own. I seated myself near my charming patient. I had never seen anything so pretty as her lovely face, surrounded by long light curls.

"'What is your age, madame?'

"'Seventeen.'

"'Is the climate of your distant birth-place very different from ours?'

"'I was born in America, at New Orleans. Mine is a brighter land than this!'

"She seemed to fear that she had expressed a regret, for she added:

"'But every land is bright to her who dwells in her husband's house, and with him at her side.'

"Her eyes sought those of William Meredith; and then she spoke, in a language unknown to me, some

words so sweet to the ear that they could only be words of love.

"After a short visit, I withdrew, promising to return. I did return, and at the end of a couple of months, I had become almost on terms of friendship with this young pair. Their happiness was not of an egotistical character; they still had time to think of others. They had hearts to understand that the poor village doctor, having no other society than that of uneducated peasants, considered the hour spent in refined conversation as a blessing not to be appreciated too highly. They related to me their travels, and after a little while, with the prompt confidence which characterizes youth, they told me their story. It was the wife who spoke as follows:

"'Doctor,' she said to me, 'far away over the sea, I have a father, sisters, relatives, and friends, whom I loved for a long time until I loved William; but then I closed my heart against those who refused to open theirs to my lover. William's father forbade him to marry me, because he was too noble for the daughter of an American planter; my father forbade me to love William, because he was too proud to give his daughter to a man whose family would not have received her with affection. They tried to separate us; but our love was too strong. For a long time we begged, wept, and implored the pity of those whom it was our duty to obey; they remained inflex-

ible—and we continued to love on. Doctor, have you ever loved? I hope that you have, that you may make allowances for us. We were secretly married, and we fled to France. Oh, how beautiful did the ocean seem to me in that early season of our love! Reclining in the shadow of the great sails of the ship which dashed on from billow to billow, we spent happy days, dreaming of the forgiveness of our families, and seeing nothing but joy in the future. Alas! it was not to be so. They determined to follow us, and my husband's ambitious family cruelly resolved to take advantage of some irregularity of form in our marriage in order to separate us. We have hidden ourselves in the midst of these mountains and these forests. Under a name which is not our own, we are living in perfect concealment. My father has never forgiven me; he has cursed me! This is the reason, doctor, why I cannot always smile, even when my dear William is near me!'

"How devotedly they loved each other! I have never seen a heart so completely bestowed upon another as was Eva Meredith's upon her husband! Whatever her occupation might be, she seated herself in such a position as to be able, whenever she raised her eyes, to see William. She only read the book which he was reading. With her head reclining on her husband's shoulder, her eyes followed the lines upon which William's were resting; she

wished that the same thoughts should enter the mind of each at the same moment; and whenever I crossed the garden on my way to the house, I could not avoid smiling, as I always noticed upon the sanded walks Eva's little footprint by the side of William's. What a difference, ladies, between that deserted old house which you see before you, and the charming dwelling of my young friends! The walls covered with flowers! bouquets upon every table! delightful books filled with love tales which resembled their loves! Gay birds singing around them! How pleasant it was to live there, and be loved a little by those who loved each other so much! But alas! it is but too true that happy days are not long on earth, and that Providence never accords but a little happiness in this world.

"One morning, Eva Meredith seemed to me to be ill. I questioned her with all the interest which I felt for her. She said to me abruptly:

"'It is not necessary, doctor, to go so far to find the cause; you need not feel my pulse—it is my heart which is beating too strongly. Call me a child, if you please to do so, doctor, but I am in trouble this morning. William is going to leave me; he is going to the neighboring town, beyond the mountain, to get some money which has been remitted for us.'

"'And when will he return?' I asked.

"She smiled, almost blushed, and then with a look

which seemed to say: 'Do not laugh at me,' she answered: 'This evening.'

"I could not prevent myself from smiling, notwithstanding her imploring look.

"At this moment a servant led to the door the horse which Mr. Meredith was to ride. Eva arose, went down to the garden, approached the horse, and stroking his mane, bent her head upon the animal's neck, perhaps in order to conceal the tears which were falling from her eyes. William came, and springing upon his horse, tenderly raised his wife's head.

"'Child!' he exclaimed as he affectionately kissed her forehead.

"'William! it is because we have never yet been separated so many hours at a time.'

"William Meredith leaned his head towards Eva, and again kissed her beautiful blond curls; he then plunged his spurs into his horse's side and dashed off at a gallop. I am sure that he, too, was a little agitated. Nothing is so contagious as the weakness of those we love; tears provoke tears, and the courage which prevents us from mingling our tears with those of a friend is not to be admired.

"I withdrew, and when I had returned to my own little room, began to reflect upon the happiness of loving. I wondered if ever an Eva would come and share with me my humble roof; I did not think of

inquiring if I was worthy of being loved. Good heavens! When we see persons devoted to each other, we easily perceive that it is not on account of a thousand things and for good reasons that their love is so great; they love, because it is necessary and inevitable for them to do so; they love because their hearts prompt them to love. Well! I set about seeking the good fortune of finding a heart which had need of loving, just as in my morning walks I might meet in my path a fragrant flower.

"Such were my dreams, although it is a somewhat blamable feeling to regret what we do not possess at the sight of the happiness of others. Is there not a little envy in it? and if joy could be stolen as gold can, would not the theft suggest itself to our minds?

"The day had passed, and I had just finished my frugal supper when a message came from Mrs. Meredith, begging me to call upon her. In five minutes more, I had reached the door of the white house. I found Eva, still alone, seated upon a sofa, without work or book, pale and trembling.

"'Come, doctor, come, she said to me with her gentle voice. I can no longer remain alone. See how late it is! He should have been here more than two hours ago, and he has not yet returned!'

"I was surprised at the prolonged absence of Mr. Meredith; but, in order to calm his wife, I quietly answered: 'What can we know about the time ne-

cessary to complete his business, after he reached the town? He has probably been compelled to wait; the notary was absent perhaps. There may have been papers to prepare and to execute.

"'Ah, doctor, I was sure that you would say something to console me. I did not hesitate to ask you to come; I required some one to tell me that it was silly to tremble as I do. How fearfully long the day has been! Doctor, are there any persons who find it possible to live alone? Do they not die at once as if deprived of half the air necessary for respiration? But eight o'clock is striking!'

"It was difficult for me to understand why William did not return. I could think of nothing else to say, but:

"'Madame, the sun has hardly set; it is still light, and the evening is magnificent. Come and breathe the fragrance of your flowers; come, let us go and meet your husband on the road.'

"She leaned upon my arm and walked towards the fence which enclosed the little garden. I endeavored to draw her attention to the surrounding objects. She answered me at first as a child obeys; but I perceived that her thoughts were not with her words. Her eyes remained anxiously fixed upon the green gate, still ajar as at William's departure.

"She went and leaned upon the fence, and then allowed me to talk on, smiling her thanks from time

to time; for in proportion as the evening advanced, did she lose the courage of replying to me. She gazed at the sun-set, and the grayish shades which succeeded the brilliant rays marked with certainty the march of time. Everything around us was becoming obscure; the road, whose white turnings we had until then been able to trace through the wood, disappeared from our eyes in the shadow of the great trees, and the village clock struck nine. Eva shuddered; I, myself, felt each stroke echo in my heart. I felt pity for what this woman must suffer.

"'Recollect, Madame, I answered (she had not spoken, but I answered the anxiety which spoke in all her features), recollect that Mr. Meredith can only return on a walk; the road through the wood is constantly intercepted by rocks which prevent a faster gait.'

"I spoke to her thus because I felt that it was necessary to comfort her; but the truth is that I was no longer able to account for William's absence. I, who was familiar with the distance, knew that I could have been twice to the town and back since William left home. The evening dew was beginning to penetrate our clothing, and especially the muslin which covered the poor girl. I again took her arm, and led her towards the house. She followed me mechanically. Hers was one of those gentle or I may

say weak characters who submit to control even in their grief. She walked slowly, with her head down and her eyes fixed upon the traces left in the sand by the gallop of her husband's horse. But how sad it was to return thus at night, and still without William! In vain we listened: all nature was in that profound silence which nothing disturbs in the country when night has come. How every feeling of anxiety increases then! The earth appears so gloomy enveloped in darkness, that it seems to remind us that everything in life too is destined to grow dark. It was looking at Eva that suggested to me these reflections; had I been alone they would never have occurred to me.

"We went in. Eva seated herself upon the sofa, and remained motionless, with her hands crossed upon her knees, and her head bent down. A lamp stood burning upon the mantel, and the light fell full upon her face—never shall I forget its expression of grief: she was pale, very pale; her brow and cheeks were of the same hue; the dampness of the evening air had deranged her hair, which fell in disorder upon her shoulders. Tears glistened in her eyes, and the trembling of her colorless lips indicated the effort which she made to prevent her tears from falling. She was so young that her sweet face looked like that of a child who has been forbidden to cry.

"I began to grow uneasy, and to be at a loss what

to say to Mrs. Meredith. I recollected suddenly (it was indeed a doctor's thought) that, in the midst of her anxiety, Eva had taken nothing since morning, and her condition rendered it imprudent for her to prolong this abstinence from all food. At the first word which I spoke upon this subject, she raised her eyes to my face with an expression of reproach, and this time the movement of her eyelids caused two tears to drop upon her cheeks.

"'For your child, madame!' I said to her.

"'Ah! you are right!' she murmured.

"And she arose and walked to the dining-room; but in the dining-room the little table was prepared for two, and this struck me at the moment so sadly that I neither spoke nor moved. My increasing uneasiness made me quite awkward; I had not the skill to say things which I did not think. The silence continued.

"'And yet,' I said to myself, 'I am here to console her; she sent for me for this purpose. There are undoubtedly a thousand reasons to explain this delay; let me try to find one.' I tried and tried —and then I continued silent, cursing a hundred times a minute the want of wit of a poor village doctor.

"Eva, with her head supported upon her hand, did not eat. Suddenly she turned abruptly towards me, and, bursting into tears, said:

"'Ah! doctor, I see perfectly well that you too are uneasy.'

"'No; no, madame,' I answered, speaking at random. 'Why should I be uneasy? He has probably dined with the notary. The country is safe, and besides, no one knows that he brings money back with him.'

"One of the causes of my anxiety had escaped me in spite of myself. I knew that a band of foreign reapers had passed through the village that morning, on their way to a neighboring department.

"Eva uttered a shriek.

"'Robbers! robbers!' she cried. 'I had not thought of that danger!'

"'But, madame, I only speak of it to say that it does not exist.'

"'Oh, the idea occurred to you, doctor, because you thought that this misfortune was possible! William, my William! why did you leave me?' she tearfully exclaimed.

"I was standing, overwhelmed by my want of tact, muttering some incoherent words, and feeling as a climax to the misfortune, that my eyes were about filling with tears.

"'Come! I am going to cry,' I said to myself; there was nothing wanting but this.

"At last an idea came to me.

"'Mrs. Meredith,' I said to her, 'I cannot see you

so anxious and remain by you without finding anything to say to console you. I will go and look for your husband; I will take at random one of the roads of the wood; I will look everywhere, call, and go, if necessary, even to the town.'

"'Oh! thanks, thanks, my friend!' Eva Meredith exclaimed. 'Take the gardener and the servant with you; go in every direction.'

"We returned hastily to the drawing-room, and Eva rang the bell eagerly several times. All the inmates of the little house opened, at the same moment, the different doors of the room in which we were.

"'Follow Doctor Barnabé,' exclaimed Mrs. Meredith.

"At this moment the gallop of a horse was distinctly heard upon the sand of the walk. Eva uttered a scream of happiness which penetrated every heart—never shall I forget the expression of divine joy which instantaneously lit up her face still bathed in tears.

"She flew with me to the front door. The moon at that moment escaping from a veil of clouds, shone full upon a horse covered with foam, without a rider, with bridle dragging upon the ground, and with empty stirrups flapping against his dusty flanks.

"A second scream—a scream of horror this time—escaped from Eva Meredith; she then turned towards me, her eyes fixed, her mouth partly open, her arms hanging down.

"'My friends,' I shouted to the frightened servants, 'light torches and follow me! Madame, we shall return soon, I hope, with your husband, who is slightly wounded; his foot sprained, perhaps. Keep up your courage; we shall soon return.'

"'I shall go with you,' murmured Eva Meredith in a stifled tone.

"'It is impossible,' I exclaimed; 'we must go quickly; we shall be compelled to go a distance perhaps, and, in your situation, you would endanger your own life and that of your child.'

"'I shall go with you,' Eva repeated.

"Oh! it was then that I felt in its full force how cruel was the isolation in which this woman lived. A father or a mother who had been there with her, would have ordered her to remain, would have kept her back by force; but she was alone in the world; and to all my repeated entreaties she continued to answer in a choking voice:

"'I shall go with you.'

"We started. The moon was obscured by clouds; there was no light in the heavens nor on the earth. We could hardly distinguish our road by the uncertain flicker of our torches. A servant walked before. He held down the torch first to the right and then to the left, in order to throw the light into the ditches and the hedges which bordered the road. Behind him, Mrs. Meredith, the gardener, and I fol-

lowed with our eyes the glare of the flame, searching in an agony of suspense for any object which might present itself to our sight. At intervals we called aloud Mr. Meredith's name. And after us a stifled voice sobbed out almost inaudibly the name of William, as if the heart counted upon the instinct of love to hear more easily her tears than our calls.

"We reached the wood. The rain was beginning to fall, and the drops, as they pattered upon the leaves of the trees, made so melancholy a sound that it seemed as if everything that surrounded us was weeping.

"The light garments in which Eva was clad were soon penetrated by this cold rain. Water was dripping upon the hair and the forehead of the poor child. She struck her feet against the stones in the road, and frequently stumbled so as to fall upon her knees; but she got up again with the energy of despair, and followed on. It was very painful to me to see this. The red glare of our torches illuminated successively every trunk of a tree, every rock. Sometimes, at an angle of the road, the wind seemed to extinguish this light, and then we would stop, lost in the darkness. Our voices had begun to tremble so in calling William Meredith, that they frightened us ourselves. I did not dare to look at Eva; I actually was afraid of seeing her fall dead before me.

"At last, while we were walking on in silence,

fatigued and discouraged, Mrs. Meredith suddenly pushed us aside, rushed forward, and sprang through the bushes. We followed her. When we were able to lift up a torch to distinguish objects, alas! we saw her upon her knees at the side of William's body; he was stretched upon the ground, motionless, his eyes dimmed, and his brow covered with the blood which was flowing from a wound in the left temple.

"'Doctor?' said Eva to me.

"This one word asked me: 'Is William still alive?'

"I leaned down; I felt William Meredith's pulse; I placed my hand upon his heart, and I remained silent. Eva continued to look me in the face; but gradually, as my silence was prolonged, I saw her tremble and bend, and then, without a word or cry, she fell in a swoon upon the dead body of her husband.

"But, ladies," said Doctor Barnabé, turning towards his audience, "the sun is beginning to shine; you can, if you wish, go out doors now. Let us proceed no further with this sad story."

Madame de Moncar came to the old man.

"Doctor," she said, "dear doctor, we implore you to go on; look at us, and you will not doubt the interest with which we listen to you."

And indeed there were no longer any contemptu-

ous smiles upon the young faces which surrounded the village doctor. Perhaps, even, might he have seen tears glistening in some eyes. He resumed his story:

"Mrs. Meredith was carried home, and she remained several hours upon her bed without consciousness. I felt that it was both a duty and a cruelty to extend to her my professional aid to recall her to life. I was apprehensive of the dreadful scenes which would succeed this state of unconsciousness. I remained leaning over her, bathing her temples with cold water, and anxiously awaiting the sad and yet the happy moment when she would begin again to breathe. I was mistaken, for I had never seen the effect of a great misfortune. Eva opened her eyes, and then closed them again; no tears dropped from the lids upon her cheek. She remained benumbed, motionless, and silent; and if it had not been that I felt her heart begin to beat again, I might have supposed her to be dead. What a sad thing it is to be the witness of grief which we feel to be beyond all consolation! I felt that to remain silent would seem to be wanting in pity for this unhappy woman, and that to attempt to console her seemed not to recognize sufficiently the magnitude of her misfortune. Could I who had found nothing to say to calm anxiety, hope to be more eloquent with grief like this? I took the safest course, that of absolute

silence. 'I will stay here,' I said to myself; 'I will attend to the physical disorder, as it is my duty to do, and then I will remain motionless by her side, like a devoted dog at her feet.' After I had taken this resolution, I became more calm; and I allowed her to live a life which resembled death.

"After several hours, however, I put to Mrs. Meredith's lips a spoon containing a potion which I considered necessary. Eva slowly turned her head the other way from the hand which presented her the draught. After a few minutes, I made another effort.

"'Drink, Madame,' I said to her.

"And I presented the spoon to her lips; her lips remained closed.

"'Madame, your child!' I said in a low voice.

"Eva opened her eyes, raised herself with difficulty, supported herself upon her elbow, leaned over towards the drink which I offered to her, and took it; she then fell back upon her pillow, and murmured:

"'I must wait until another life is separated from mine!"

"After that, Mrs. Meredith did not again speak, but she obeyed mechanically all my directions. Stretched upon her bed of grief, she seemed to be always asleep; but whenever in the lowest tone of voice I said to her, 'Sit up—take this,' she obeyed instantly; and this proved to me that the mind was

awake in this motionless body without a single moment of forgetfulness or rest.

"I had to make, alone, all the arrangements for William's funeral. Nothing was ever known positively in reference to the cause of his death. The money which he was to bring from the town was not found upon his person; perhaps he was robbed and murdered, or perhaps this money which was given to him in bank notes had dropped from his pocket as his horse had fallen. And as some time elapsed before any effort was made to find it, it was not impossible that the rain during the night had caused it to disappear in the marshy earth and the wet grass. A search was made but without any result, and soon all attempts to find it were abandoned. I had endeavored to learn from Eva Meredith if there were not some letters to be written to give intelligence to her family or her husband's. It was with difficulty that I could get any answer from her. At last I succeeded in understanding that it was only necessary inform their business man, who would do whatever was proper. I hoped then that at least from England, there would come some tidings which would decide the future of this poor child; but no—days succeeded days, and no one in the world seemed to know that the widow of William Meredith was living in perfect solitude in a poor village. After awhile, in order to endeavor to recall Eva to the con-

sciousness of existence, I had desired her to rise from her bed. The day after the one on which I gave this advice, I found her up, dressed in black; she was the shadow of the beautiful Eva Meredith. Her hair was parted in bands on her pale brow. She was seated by a window, and remained as motionless as she had been in her bed.

"It was thus that I silently spent long evenings with her. I took a book for the sake of appearing to be occupied. Every day on meeting her I spoke some words of pity and devotion. She answered me by a look which said, 'Thanks;' and then we would remain without speaking more. I waited for an occasion to present itself to enable me to exchange some thoughts with her; but my want of tact and my respect for her misfortune prevented me from forcing one, or caused me to allow it to pass unimproved. I accustomed myself gradually to this absence of all conversation, to this self-communion; and, after all, what could I have said? All that was important was that she should know that she was not entirely alone in the world; and obscure as was the friend who was left to her, it was at any rate a friend. I only went to see her to tell her by my presence, 'I am here.'

"This was a strange episode in my life; it had a great influence upon the rest of my destiny. If I had not shown so much regret at the thought of the

removal of the white house, I would hasten to the conclusion of this story; but as you have desired to know why this house was for me a consecrated place, I must tell you what I thought and felt under its humble roof. Pardon me, ladies, for a few serious words. It is not unbecoming to youth to be a little sad; it has so much time before it to laugh and forget!

"The son of a peasant who had grown rich, I had been sent to Paris to finish my studies. During the four years which I passed in that great city, I had retained the awkwardness of my manners and the simplicity of my speech, but I had rapidly lost the innocence of my feelings. I returned to these mountains almost learned, but at the same time scarcely believing in anything which causes one to live happily under a thatched roof with one's wife and children, without turning one's eyes from the crosses in the church-yard to be seen from the threshold of one's dwelling.

"When Eva Meredith was happy, her happiness had already given me salutary lessons. 'They deceived me then,' said I to myself; there are true hearts, there are souls as innocent as the souls of children. The pleasure of a moment is not everything in life. There are feelings which do not die with the year. It is possible to love long—perhaps forever.

"In observing the love of William and of Eva, I found once more my simple peasant-character of earlier years. I delighted in dreaming of a virtuous wife, attentive to her household duties, embellishing my poor house by her cares and her good order. I fancied myself proud of the sweet serenity of her features, indicating the faithful and even somewhat reserved wife. Certainly those were far from being my Paris dreams at the conclusion of a gay evening spent with my companions. A dreadful misfortune fell like a thunderbolt on Eva Meredith. This time, I was slower to learn the lesson which every day repeated to me.

"Eva would remain seated by a window, her eyes sadly fixed upon the sky. This position, usual enough to those who indulge in reveries, attracted my attention but little at first; nevertheless, after a time, it began to impress me. With my book lying open on my lap, I would look at Mrs. Meredith, and feeling sure that her eyes would not meet mine, would examine her attentively. Eva would gaze upon the sky—my eyes would follow the direction of hers.

"'Ah,' said I to myself, with all but a smile, 'she believes that she will go and meet him there!'

"And I again took up my book, thinking how fortunate it was for the weakness of women that they are consoled in their grief by such thoughts.

"As I have told you, my residence among students

had put bad ideas into my head. Every day, however, I saw Eva in the same attitude, and every day I was induced to reflect upon the same subject. Gradually I began to think that it was a good dream in which she indulged. I began to regret that I could not believe that this dream was a reality. The soul, heaven, eternal life, all that my pastor had formerly taught me, flitted through my imagination as I sat in the evening by the open window. I said to myself:

"'What the old pastor taught me has more consolation in it than the cold realities of which science has given me a glimpse!'

"And then I would look into Eva's face as she continued to gaze upon the heavens, whilst the bells of the village church were heard in the distance, and the rays of the setting sun illuminated the cross on the cloud-surrounded spire. I often came and seated myself by the side of the poor widow, as persevering in her grief as in her holy hopes.

"'What!' thought I, 'is so much love lavished upon only a handful of dust which has already mingled with the earth? all these sighs are objectless! William has departed in his youth, with his warm affections, and with a heart where all was still in flower. She only loved him one year, one short year, and all is over for her! There is nothing above our heads but vacant air! Love, that eager, earnest

passion, is only a flame placed in the obscure prison-house of the body, where it shines and burns, and is extinguished when the frail wall which encloses it falls: a little dust is all that remains of our loves, of our hopes, of our thoughts, of our passions, of all that breathes, is moved and is excited within us!'

"There was a great silence at the bottom of my heart.

"In fact, I had ceased to think: I was, as it were, slumbering between what I no longer denied and did not yet believe. Finally, one of the loveliest star-light evenings which it is possible to imagine, as Eva had clasped her hands to pray, I do not know how it happened, but my hands found themselves clasped too, and my lips opened to murmur a prayer. Then, by a happy chance, for the first time, Eva Meredith looked at what was passing around her, as if a secret instinct had warned her that my soul had just placed itself in harmony with hers.

"'Thanks,' she said, extending her hand to me; 'remember him, and pray thus sometimes for him.'

"'Oh! madame,' I exclaimed, 'might we all meet again in a better world, whether our lives have been long or short, happy or full of trials!'

"'William's immortal soul is there!' she said to me in a grave voice, whilst her eyes, both melancholy and brilliant, were again fixed upon the heavens.

"Since then, in the fulfilment of the duties of my profession, I have often stood by the bedside of the dying; but to those who were left behind, I have always spoken some words of consolation about a better life than this; and those words I firmly believed!

"At last, a month after these silent events, Eva Meredith gave birth to a son. When, for the first time, her child was brought to her, 'William!' exclaimed the poor widow, and tears, tears of relief too long withheld from her grief, flowed in torrents from her eyes. The child bore this so much loved name of William, and a little cradle was placed by the mother's bedside. And then Eva's eyes, which had been turned away from earth, again looked back to earth. She gazed at her son as she had gazed at the heavens. She leaned over him to trace the likeness of his father. God had permitted a perfect resemblance between William and the son whom he was never to see.

"A great change took place around us. Eva Meredith, who had consented to live until the existence of her child should be separated from her own, now, as I easily perceived, wished still to live, because she felt that the protection of her love was necessary to this little being. She passed days and evenings, seated by the cradle, and when I came to see her she spoke to me, and questioned me in reference to the care to be bestowed upon her child; she

explained what he had suffered; she asked what it was necessary to do to spare him the slightest discomfort. She feared for the child the heat of a sunray, the chill of the gentlest breeze. Leaning over him, she covered him with her body, and warmed him with her kisses. One day, I thought that I almost saw her smile upon her son; but she would never, when rocking his cradle, sing to induce sleep to visit her child's eyes; she would call one of her women, and say, 'Sing my child to sleep!' and then she would listen, her tears gently flowing upon little William's brow. Poor child! he was beautiful, gentle and easy to manage; but, as if his mother's grief before his birth had reached him, this child was sad; he never cried, but he never smiled; he was quiet, and such quiet at his age suggests the idea of suffering. It seemed to me that all the tears shed upon his cradle froze up this little being. I should have liked to see already William's caressing arms twined around his mother's neck—I should have liked to see him endeavor to return the kisses which were lavished upon him.

"'But of what am I thinking?' said I to myself; 'can we expect this little creature, who is not yet a year old, to understand that he is placed in this world to love and console this woman?'

"It was, I assure you, ladies, a spectacle which moved the heart to see this young mother, pale and

feeble, who had abandoned all future for herself, take again to life on account of a little child who could not even say yet: 'My mother; I thank you.' What a wonderful thing is the human heart! how much it can make of a very little! Give it a grain of sand, and it will raise a mountain; at its last throb, show it an atom still to love, and it will begin again to beat; it only stops forever when nothing but vacancy surrounds it, and when even the shadow of what was dear to it has disappeared from the earth!

"Eva would place the child upon a carpet at her feet, and as she watched him playing would say to me:

"'Mr. Barnabé, when my son is grown up, I wish him to be distinguished and learned; I will choose a noble profession for him; I will follow him everywhere—upon the sea if he is a sailor, to India if he is in the army; I wish glory and honor for him. I will lean upon his arm—I will say with pride, "I am his mother!" He will let me follow him, will he not, Mr. Barnabé? A poor woman who only requires a little silence and solitude to weep is in no one's way?'

"And then we would discuss the different careers from which to choose, and we placed at a stroke twenty years upon the head of this child, both of us forgetting that these twenty years would make us old and our little portion of the bright days of life

over! But we did not think of ourselves; we only thought of being young and happy when there should be for him youth and happiness.

"I could not prevent myself, while listening to these golden dreams, from examining with alarm this child upon whom depended so entirely another's existence. A vague uneasiness possessed me, in spite of myself; but I said to myself:

"'She has wept enough—the God to whom she prays will not refuse her a little happiness.'

"Such was the state of affairs when I received a letter from my uncle, my only remaining relative. My uncle, who was attached to the faculty of Montpellier, invited me to join him, in order to complete in that learned town my initiation into the secrets of my art. This letter, written in the form of an entreaty, was in fact an order for me: I had to go. One morning, my heart very full as I thought of the isolation in which I was leaving the widow and the orphan, I went to the white house for the purpose of taking leave of Eva Meredith. When I told her that I was about to leave her for a long time, I cannot say whether or not a slight sadness overspread her features. Her beautiful countenance had, since the death of William Meredith, worn an expression of such profound melancholy, that it was only possible to notice a smile upon it, if one ever appeared; as to sadness it was always there.

"'You are going!' she said, 'you have been so useful to my child!'

"The poor woman forgot to regret her last friend who was departing—the mother only regretted the physician who was useful to her son. I did not complain. To be useful is the most grateful reward of those who devote themselves to others.

"'Farewell,' she said, giving me her hand. 'Wherever you go, may God bless you! and if it be his will that some day misfortune shall overtake you, may he at least place at your side a heart as compassionate as your own!'

"I bowed my head upon Eva Meredith's hand, and walked away deeply affected.

"The child was seated before the steps on the grass in the sun. I went to him, took him up in my arms and kissed him several times; I continued to gaze at him a long, long time, attentively and sadly; and then tears moistened my eyes. 'O no! no! I must be mistaken!' I murmured as I hastened away from the white house."

"Good heavens! doctor!" exclaimed together all his auditors, "What was it that you feared for this child?"

"Permit me, ladies,' answered Barnabé, 'to finish my story in my own way; everything shall be told at its proper time. I am relating the events in the order in which they happened to me.

"When I reached Montpelier, I was extremely well received by my uncle, except that he informed me that he could neither lodge nor feed me, nor lend me money; and that I, a stranger without reputation, could not expect a single patient in that city filled with celebrated physicians.

"'Then, uncle,' said I, 'I will return to my village.'

"'Not at all, not at all!' he resumed. 'I have found an honorable situation for you. An Englishman, extremely rich, gouty and fretful, wishes to have a physician under his roof, an intelligent young man, to attend him in his illness under the direction of another physician. I proposed you, and you have been accepted: let us go there.'

"'We immediately proceeded to the residence of Lord James Kysington. We entered a spacious and magnificent house, filled with servants, and after a series of delays, first in the ante-chambers and then in the first parlors, we were introduced into the study of Lord James Kysington.

"His lordship was seated in a large arm-chair. He was an old man, of a cold and stern aspect. His hair, completely white, contrasted singularly with his eyebrows, which were still jet-black. He was tall and thin, and least so I fancied that I made out his person to be through the folds of a large cloth garment fashioned like a bed-gown. His hands were

covered by his sleeves, and a white bear-skin enveloped his suffering feet. There stood near him a small table upon which were placed several phials containing medicines.

"'My lord, this is my nephew, Doctor Barnabé.'

"Lord James Kysington bowed to me, that is to say, he made an imperceptible motion of his head, looking me in the face.

"'He is very well read,' continued my uncle, 'and I have no doubt that his services will be useful to your lordship.'

"A second movement of the head was the only answer which my uncle received.

"'Besides,' continued he, 'as he has been well educated, he can read to my lord, or write to his dictation.'

"'I will be obliged to him for being so kind,' answered at last Lord James Kysington, who immediately afterwards closed his eyes, either because he was fatigued, or because he desired to have it understood that the conversation was to end there.

"I then had an opportunity to look about me. There was seated by the window a young woman, very elegantly dressed, who was at work upon some embroidery without raising her eye towards us, as if we were not worthy of being looked at by her. A child was playing with toys upon a carpet before her. The young woman did not, at the first glance, appear

beautiful to me, because she had black hair and black eyes, and, in my opinion, in order to be beautiful, it was necessary to be light-haired and fair like Eva Meredith; and besides, with my inexperienced judgment, I could not separate beauty from a certain kindly expression. Those at whom I delighted to look were those whom I supposed to be gentle in heart, and it was long before I could convince myself of the beauty of this woman, whose brow was haughty, her expression scornful, and her mouth unvisited by smiles. She was, like Lord James Kysington, tall, thin, and somewhat pale. There was a certain family likeness between them. Their two characters must have been too much alike to suit each other. These two cold and silent persons were living together without conversation or love between them. The child had also learned not to make any noise; he walked upon tip-toe, and at the slightest creek of the floor, a severe look from his mother or from Lord James Kysington turned him into a statue.

"It was too late to return to my village; but it is always in time to regret what we have loved and lost. My heart choked as I thought of my cottage, my valley, and my liberty.

"Here is what I succeeded in learning about this melancholy household:

"Lord James Kysington had come to Montpellier

for the benefit of his health, injured by the climate of India. The second son of the Duke of Kysington, a lord himself by courtesy, he owed to his talents, and not to an inheritance, his fortune and his political position in the House of Commons. Lady Mary was the wife of his youngest brother, and Lord James Kysington, free to dispose of his property, had recognized, as his future heir, his nephew, the son of Lady Mary. I began to devote myself to this old man with all the zeal of which I was capable, entirely persuaded that the best way to better an uncomfortable position is to fulfil scrupulously even a disagreeable duty.

"Lord James Kysington was of the most formal politeness to me. A bow thanked me for every assistance which I rendered, for every movement made in his service. I read to him for hours, and no one would interrupt—neither the gloomy old man whom I was putting to sleep, nor the young woman who did not listen, nor the child who trembled in his uncle's presence. I had never seen anything so dull, and still you know, ladies, that the little white house had long ceased to be gay; but the silence occasioned by grief supposes thoughts so grave, that words are considered insufficient to express them. We feel that the spirit is alive although the body is without motion. In my new dwelling silence prevailed from very emptiness!

"One day, whilst Lord James Kysington seemed to be dozing, and Lady Mary was occupied with her customary work, little Harry climbed upon my knees, and, as we were in a distant corner of the room, he asked me, in a whisper, some questions with the natural curiosity of his age; and then, in my turn, not thinking of what I was saying, I questioned him about his family.

"'Have you any brothers or sisters?' I asked.

"'I have a little sister who is very pretty.'

"'What is her name?' I inquired, at the same time glancing over the columns of a newspaper.

"'She has a beautiful name; guess it, doctor.'

"I cannot tell what I was thinking about. In my village I had only heard the names of peasants, none of which could belong to the daughter of Lady Mary. Mrs. Meredith was the only lady of society whom I had known, and as the child repeated, 'Guess, guess,' I answered at random:

"'Eva, perhaps?'

"We were speaking very low; but the moment the name of Eva escaped my lips, Lord James Kysington suddenly opened his eyes and sat up; Lady Mary dropped her needle and turned eagerly towards me. I was overwhelmed by the effect which I had produced; I looked by turns at Lord James Kysington and Lady Mary, without daring to speak another word; after a few minutes, Lord James fell

back in his arm-chair, and closed his eyes, Lady Mary resumed her needle, and Harry and I discontinued our conversation.

"I reflected for a long time upon this strange incident; and then, as all had returned to the accustomed quiet, and silence and stillness were re-established around me, I arose noiselessly, and prepared to leave the room. Lady Mary laid down her work, and motioned me to follow her. When we reached the parlor, she closed the door, and standing in front of me, with her head up and her whole countenance assuming the imperious air which was its natural expression, said: 'Mr. Barnabé, you will be so good as never to pronounce the name which just escaped your lips; it is a name which Lord James must not hear.' She bowed slightly and returned to the room, the door of which she closed.

"A thousand thoughts rushed through my brain: 'This Eva, of whom I was forbidden to speak, was it not Eva Meredith? was she the daughter-in-law of Lord James Kysington? was I under the roof of William's father?' I hoped, I doubted, for, after all, if for me this name of Eva only represented one person, for every one else it was only a name, undoubtedly common in England to many women.

"I did not dare ask any questions; around me every voice was silent, and every heart unsympathetic; but the thought that I was in the family of Eva Mere-

dith, with the women who robbed the widow and the orphan of the paternal inheritance, became the constant pre-occupation of my days and nights. A thousand times I dreamed that I saw the return of Eva and her son to this household, and that I begged and obtained forgiveness for them; but I raised my eyes, and the cold, emotionless countenance of Lord James Kysington, froze all the hopes of my heart. I began to examine his face as if I had never before seen it; I endeavored to make out some play upon his features, some lines indicative of a little sensibility. I sought for the soul upon which I wished to work. Alas! I nowhere found it. I did not lose courage; my cause was too good a one! 'Nonsense!' I said to myself, 'what signifies the expression of a face? Of what consequence is the exterior envelope which strikes the eye? May not the roughest chest contain gold? Is it necessary that all within us should be divined at the first look? And has not, whoever has lived among men, learned to separate his soul and his heart from the meaningless expression of his countenance?'

"I resolved to satisfy my suspicions—but what means should I take to do so? It was impossible to question Lady Mary or Lord James Kysington; should I question the servants? They were French, and but recently taken into the service of the family. An English valet-de-chambre, the only servant who

had accompanied his master, had just been sent to London upon a confidential mission. It was through Lord James Kysington that I determined to make my investigations. He should inform me, and from him would I obtain their forgiveness. The stern expression of his face ceased to alarm me. I said to myself: 'When in a forest we meet a tree apparently dead, we cut into it for the purpose of ascertaining if the sap is not still alive under the dead bark; in the same way will I strike upon his heart, and I will see if there is not concealed vitality somewhere.' I awaited the opportunity.

"To wait patiently, is to bring about what one awaits. Instead of depending upon circumstances, we control circumstances.

"One night Lord James Kysington sent for me; he was in suffering. After having done what I considered necessary for him, I remained alone with him in order to watch the result of my prescriptions. The room was obscure; a lighted candle rendered objects barely visible, but not distinct. The noble and pale face of Lord James was supported by his pillow. His eyes were closed, according to his habit when he prepared himself to suffer, as if he wished to concentrate his moral strength so as to lose none of it; he never complained; he lay stretched upon his bed as straight and motionless as the statue of a king upon his tomb. Usually he requested me to

read, hoping either that the thoughts of the book would take possession of his mind, or else that the monotonous sound of a voice would induce sleep.

"That night, he motioned me with his bony hand to take a book and begin to read; but I sought for one in vain—books and newspapers had all been carried down to the parlor; all the doors were locked, and without ringing and alarming the house, it was impossible to procure a book.

"Lord Kysington made me a sign of impatience and then one of resignation, and pointed to a chair that I might sit by his side. We remained thus a long time without speaking, almost in the dark, the clock alone breaking upon the silence by the regular tick of the pendulum. Sleep did not come to him. Suddenly Lord James opened his eyes, and turning towards me, said:

"'Speak—tell me something—whatever you please.'

"His eyes closed again, and he waited for me to obey.

"My heart beat violently. The moment had arrived.

"'My lord,' I said, 'I am very much afraid that I know nothing which could interest your lordship. I can only speak of myself and of the events of my life, and it would require the history of some of the great men of the world to fix your attention. What can a

peasant relate, who has lived satisfied with a little in obscurity and quiet?

"'I never left my village, my lord. It is a pretty hamlet in the mountains; so pretty that even without being born there one might choose it for a residence. Not far from my village there is a country house where I have seen rich people who might have left and yet remained, because the woods are thick, the paths covered with flowers, and the brooks very limpid and bounding over the rocks. Alas! they were at first two in that house—and soon a poor woman remained alone there until the birth of her son. My lord, she is one of your countrywomen, more lovely than is often met with in either England or France; so good that only the angels in heaven can equal her goodness. She was only eighteen when I left her fatherless and motherless, and already the widow of an adored husband; she is feeble, delicate, almost ill, and her life is necessary; for who else would protect that little child?

"'O! my lord, there are very unhappy persons in this world. To be unhappy in the middle of one's life, or when old age has come, is sad enough, undoubtedly, but at least we have then some happy memories which remind us that we have had our share, our time, and our happiness; but when grief comes before eighteen, it is still sadder, for nothing calls back the dead to life, and nothing is left for us

but to grieve the rest of our days. Poor child! we see a beggar by the road side, and it is from cold and hunger that he suffers; we give him charity, and look at him without pain, because it is possible to assist him; but to this unhappy woman whose heart is broken, the only possible charity would be to love her, and there is no one near her to do that.

"'Ah! my lord, if you only knew what a handsome young man her husband was! Scarcely twenty-three, a noble face, a high forehead—like your own, intelligent and proud, eyes of a dark blue, somewhat dreamy and melancholy, from reasons which I learned—because he loved his father and his country, and he was compelled to remain away from them! His smile was full of goodness. Ah! how he would have smiled upon his little child, if he had lived long enough to see him! He even loved him before he was born; he delighted to look at the cradle prepared for him. Poor, poor young man! I saw him, in a stormy night, in a dark forest, stretched upon the wet earth, motionless, lifeless, his garments covered with mud, his brow wounded frightfully, and the blood flowing from him in torrents. I saw—alas! I saw William'—

"'You witnessed my son's death!' exclaimed Lord James Kysington, rising like a spectre from the pillows which supported him, and fixing upon me his eyes, which were so large and penetrating that I

drew back in alarm; but notwithstanding the darkness of the room, I thought that I noticed a tear moisten the edge of the old man's eyelids.

"'My lord,' I answered, 'I saw your son die, and I saw his child born!'

"Then succeeded a moment of silence.

"Lord Kysington looked fixedly at me; at last he moved, his trembling hand sought my hand, pressed it, and then relaxed its hold, and he fell back upon his pillow.

"'Enough, enough, sir! I am in pain; I require rest. Leave me!'

"I bowed and left the room.

"Before I went out, Lord James had resumed his habitual position, silent and motionless.

"I will not relate to you, ladies, my numerous and respectful efforts with Lord James Kysington, his indecision and hidden anxieties, and how his paternal love, awakened by the details of the horrible accident, how his pride of race, awakened by the hope of leaving an heir of his own name, in the end triumphed over his bitter resentment.

"Three months after the occurrence of the scene which I have just been describing, I stood upon the threshold of the Montpellier house, waiting for Eva Meredith and her son, recalled to their family to resume all their rights. It was a happy day for me.

"Lady Mary, who, being a woman mistress of

herself, had dissembled her joy when family disagreements had made her son her brother's future heir, dissembled still better her regret and her rage when Eva Meredith, or rather Eva Kysington, became reconciled with her father-in-law. The marble brow of Lady Mary remained without a trace of emotion; but how many bad passions must have swollen her heart under this appearance of calm.

"I was standing, then, upon the threshold when the carriage of Eva Meredith (I shall continue to call her so) entered the court-yard. Eva eagerly stretched out her hand to me.

"'Thanks, thanks, my friend!' she murmured. She wiped away the tears which were trembling in her eyes, and, taking her son by the hand, now a child of three years, as beautiful as an angel, she entered her new home. 'I am afraid,' she said to me. She was still the feeble woman, broken by misfortune, pale, melancholy, and lovely, who believed no more in the hopes of earth, and felt sure of nothing but the things of heaven. I walked at her side, and while, still dressed in her mourning, she was ascending the first steps of the staircase, her gentle face bathed in tears, her delicate and feeble figure bending towards the banister, her outstretched hand leading after her her child, who walked even more slowly than she did, Lady Mary and her son made their appearance at the top of the stairs. Lady Mary wore a

dress of brown velvet, beautiful bracelets encircled her arms; a slender chain of gold bound her brow, worthy, indeed, of a diadem. She walked with a confident tread, her head elevated, her look full of pride. It was thus that the two mothers saw each other for the first time.

"'You are welcome, madame,' said Lady Mary, bowing to Eva Meredith.

"Eva endeavored to smile, and answered by some words of affection. How could she have suspected hatred, she who only knew how to love? We walked towards Lord James' room. Mrs. Meredith, scarcely able to stand, went in first, advanced a few steps, and dropped upon her knees by the arm-chair of her father-in-law. She took her child in her arms, and placing him upon Lord Kysington's knees, said:

"'Here is my son!'

"And then the poor woman wept and was silent.

"Lord James looked a long time at the child. Gradually, as he recognized the features of the son whom he had lost, his eyes moistened, and his face assumed an affectionate expression. The moment came when, forgetting his age, the progress of time, and the misfortunes which had happened, he fancied himself carried back to the happy days when he pressed his own son, an infant, to his heart.

"'William! William!' he murmured; 'my daughter!' he added, extending his hand to Eva Meredith.

"My eyes filled with tears. Eva possessed friends, a protector, fortune; I was happy, and that was perhaps the cause of my tears!

"Her child, quietly seated upon his grandfather's knees, had manifested neither pleasure nor fear.

"'Will you love me?' said the old man to him.

"The child raised his head, but made no answer.

"'Do you hear me?' I will be your father.

"'I will be your father!' gently repeated the child.

"'Excuse him,' said his mother, 'he has always been alone, he is still very small—he is alarmed at the presence of so many persons; by-and-bye, my lord, he will better understand your kind words.'

"But I looked at the child, examined him silently, and recollected my foreboding fears. Alas! these fears were changed into certainty; the horrible shock which Eva Meredith had experienced before the birth of her child had been fatal to him; and a mother alone, in her youth, her love and her inexperience, could have remained so long in ignorance of her misfortune.

"At the same time, and in the same manner as I did, Lady Mary looked at the child.

"I never shall forget in my life the expression of her face; she was standing, her piercing glance was fixed upon little William, and seemed to penetrate to the child's heart.

"As she continued to look, her eyes flashed light-

ning, her mouth opened as if to smile, her breathing was short and oppressed as when one is in expectation of some great joy.

"She looked and looked. There was upon her face, hope, doubt and expectation. At last her hatred was clairvoyant; a cry of inward triumph escaped from her heart, but did not go beyond her lips. She drew herself up, cast a disdainful look upon Eva, her vanquished enemy, and again recovered her ordinary calmness.

"Lord James Kysington, fatigued by the emotions of the day, dismissed us from his room. He remained alone the whole evening.

"The next day, after an agitated night, when I went down to Lord Kysington, all his family were collected around him; Lady Mary was holding little William on her knees,—it was the tiger holding its prey.

"'The beautiful child!' she said. 'Look, my lord, at these silky, blond curls! how brilliant they are in the sun! But, dear Eva, is your son always so taciturn? He has not the vivacity, the gaiety of his age.'

"'He is always sad,' answered Mrs. Meredith. 'Alas! with me he could never learn to laugh!'

"'We will try to amuse him, to cheer him up,' resumed Lady Mary. 'Come, my dear child, kiss your grandfather! stretch out your arms to him and tell him that you love him.'

"William did not stir.

"'Do you not know how to kiss? Harry, my dear, kiss your uncle, and give a good example to your cousin.'

"Harry sprang upon Lord Kysington's knees, put his arms round his neck, and said:

"'I love you, my dearest uncle.'

"'It is your turn now, William my love,' said Lady Mary.

"William remained motionless, and without even raising his eyes to his grandfather's face.

"A tear rolled down Eva Meredith's cheeks.

"'It is my fault,' she said, 'I have brought up my child badly!'

"And taking William upon her knees, her tears fell upon her child's brow; he did not feel them, and fell asleep upon his mother's heavy heart.

"'Endeavor,' said Lord Kysington to his daughter-in-law, 'to make William less shy.'

"'I will try,' answered Eva in that tone of a submissive child with which I had been so long familiar,—'I will try, and perhaps I shall succeed, if Lady Mary will be good enough to tell me what she has done to make her son so happy and so gay.'

"And then the forlorn mother looked at Harry, who was playing by Lord James' arm-chair, and her glance turned to her poor sleeping child.

"'He suffered even before his birth,' she mur-

mured; 'we have both of us been very unhappy; but I must try to weep no more that William may be gay, like other children.'

"Two days passed by, two painful days, full of secret trouble, full of mournful anxiety. Lord James Kysington's brow wore an expression of care; his looks from time to time questioned me. I turned away my eyes in order to avoid answering.

"On the morning of the third day, Lady Mary came in with toys of every kind which she brought for the two children. Harry seized a sword and ran about the room shouting for joy. William remained motionless, holding the playthings which were given him in his little hands; but he made no attempt to play with them; he did not even look at them.

"'My lord,' said Lady Mary to her brother, 'take this book of engravings, and give it to your grandson—perhaps the pictures will arouse his attention.'

"And she then led William to Lord James. The child made no opposition, walked, stopped, and remained like a statue where he was placed.

"Lady Kysington opened the book. Every eye was turned towards the group, composed of the old man and his grandson. Lord James was thoughtful, silent and stern; he turned over several pages slowly, stopping at every picture and looking at William, whose fixed eyes were not directed to the book at all. Lord Kysington continued to turn over several

leaves, and then his hand stopped, the book dropped from his knees to the floor, and a mournful silence prevailed in the room.

"Lady Mary approached me, leaned over as if to speak in my ear, but in a voice loud enough to be heard by all, said:

"'But this child is an idiot! doctor.'

"A cry answered her. Eva started up as if struck by lightning, and, pressing her son convulsively to her bosom, exclaimed, while her eyes flashed with indignation for the first time:

"'An idiot! an idiot!' she repeated, 'because he has been unhappy all his life—because he has seen nothing but tears since his eyes first opened—because he does not know how to play like your son, who has always been surrounded by joy! Ah! madame, you insult misfortune! Come, come, my child!' exclaimed Eva, in tears. 'Come, let us leave these pitiless hearts, who can only utter harsh words about our misfortune!'

"And the unhappy mother, carrying her son, ascended rapidly to her room. She placed William upon the floor, and falling upon her knees before this little child, exclaimed:

"'My son! my son!'

"William came to his mother, and leaned his head upon her shoulder.

"'Doctor,' she exclaimed, 'he loves me—you see

he does! he comes to me when I call him; he kisses me! His caresses have sufficed for my tranquillity, for my melancholy happiness! Good heavens, this was not enough! My son, speak to me! My son, speak to me, comfort me! find a word of consolation, a single word for your despairing mother! Until now I have only asked you to show me your father's features, and to leave me in silence to weep without restraint. But now, William, I must have words from you! Do you not behold my tears, my terror! Dear child, you so beautiful, so like your father, speak, speak to me!'

"Alas! alas! the child remained motionless, without alarm and without intelligence; a smile only, a horrible smile, played upon his lips. Eva concealed her face in her hands, and remained upon her knees on the floor. I heard her sobs a long time.

"Then I asked heaven to inspire me with words of consolation, which might bring a gleam of hope to this poor mother. I spoke to her of the future, of a cure to be expected, of a possible, probable change; but hope will not be based upon falsehood. When it does not exist, it shows no light. A terrible blow, a mortal blow had been struck, and Eva Meredith, for the first time, understood the whole truth.

"From that day forward, only one child was taken down every morning to Lord Kysington's room. Two women came there, but only one seemed to be

living—the other was silent as the dead; one said, 'my son,'—the other never spoke of her child; one carried her head up—the other bowed hers, the better to conceal her tears; one was beautiful and brilliant—the other was pale, and clad in black. The contest was over. Lady Mary had triumphed.

"Harry was cruelly allowed to play before the eyes of Eva Meredith. Without a thought for the agony of this woman, Harry was brought to repeat his lessons in his uncle's presence; they boasted of his progress. The ambitious mother calculated everything that might consolidate her success; and while she had gentle words and feigned consolations for Eva Meredith, she inflicted torture upon her heart every moment of the day. Lord James Kysington, wounded in his dearest hopes, had resumed the cold indifference of manner which had so much alarmed me. I now saw that it was the stone which closes the tomb. Perfectly polite to his daughter-in-law, he spoke no word of affection to her; the daughter of the American planter could only find a place in his heart as the mother of his grandson. Upon this child he looked as though he was no longer in existence. Lord James Kysington became more gloomy and taciturn than ever, regretting perhaps that he had yielded to my entreaties, and had given to his old age a painful and useless emotion.

"A year rolled by, and then a sad day came when

Lord James Kysington sent for Eva Meredith, and motioning her to sit down by his arm-chair, said:

"'Listen to me, madame, listen to me with courage. I wish to act honorably towards you, and to conceal nothing from you; I am old and ill; it is time for me to arrange my affairs. It is unfortunate for both you and me. I will not speak to you of my resentment at my son's marriage. Your misfortune disarmed me, and I sent for you to come to me. I desired to see your son William and to love in him the heir of my fortune, the young man upon whom were based all my dreams of the future and of ambition.

"'Alas! madame, fate has been cruel to us! The widow and son of my son shall have everything which can assure an honorable existence; but master of a fortune which I alone have acquired, I adopt my nephew, and him I shall regard in future as my only heir! I am about to return to London, to see to my affairs; come with me, madame, my house is yours—it will give me pleasure to see you there.'

"Eva (as she afterwards told me) for the first time felt courage take the place of despair. She had the strength which a noble pride gives; she raised her head, and if her brow had not the haughtiness of Lady Mary's, it had at least the dignity of misfortune.

"'Go, my lord,' she answered, 'go, and I will not go with you. I will not go to see my son deposed! You have been in great haste, my lord, to condemn him forever! What do we know of the future? You were very quick to despair of God's pity!'

"'The future,' answered Lord James Kysington, 'is, at my age, entirely in the passing day. If I desire to act, I must act in the morning, without even waiting for the evening.'

"'Do as you think best,' answered Eva. 'I shall return to the cottage where I was happy with my husband—I shall return there with your grandson, Lord William Kysington; this name, his only inheritance, he will retain; and should the world only know this name by reading it on his tomb, your name, my lord, is the name of my poor son!'

"A week afterwards, Eva Meredith descended the great staircase of the house, again holding her son by the hand as she had done the first time she crossed that fatal threshold. Lady Mary was a little behind her, a few steps higher up; numerous servants, sad and silent, were gazing with regret upon their gentle mistress driven from the paternal roof.

"On leaving it, Eva Meredith left the only persons whom she knew in the world—the only ones from whom she had the right to claim compassion; the world opened before her, boundless and void; it was Hagar departing for the desert."

"This is horrible, doctor!" exclaimed the old man's auditors. "Are there any lives so completely miserable? You yourself saw!—"

"I saw, but I have not yet told you all," answered Doctor Barnabé. "Permit me to finish my story.

"A short time after Eva Meredith left, Lord Kysington started for London. As I was again free, I abandoned the idea of more instruction: I had sufficient science for my village, and I returned there in all haste.

"Here we were once more reunited in the little white house as before this two years' absence; but how greatly had that interval of time increased the misfortune! No one dared to speak of the future, that unknown moment of which we have so much need, and without which the present day passes, if it is happy, with but too feeble a happiness; and if it is sad, with too great sadness!

"Never have I seen a grief more noble in its simplicity, more calm in its strength, than that of Eva Meredith. She continued to pray to the God who afflicted her. God for her, was He who can accomplish the impossible, He in whom we begin to hope when the hopes of this world have vanished. Her eyes, so full of faith, would rest upon her son's countenance as if in momentary expectation of seeing the mind beam there for which her prayers implored his Creator. I should fail to picture to

you all the treasures of love, of thought and of ingenious story which she lavished upon that undeveloped intellect. He would repeat, like an echo, the last words addressed to him; she would explain to him heaven, God, the angels; she tried to teach him to pray, and she would put his little hands together—but she could not make him raise his eyes to heaven!

"She attempted under every possible form, the first lessons of childhood; she read to her son, talked to him, busied his eyes with pictures, and sought in music other sounds than words.

"One day, with a terrible effort, she related to William his father's death; she hoped for—she expected a tear. But her child fell asleep while she was yet speaking to him; tears were shed, but it was from the eyes of Eva Meredith that they fell.

"She exhausted herself in vain efforts and struggles; she persevered that she might continue to hope; but to William's eyes pictures were only colors; to his ears, words were only a sound. This child, however, grew astonishingly, and became of a marvellous beauty. One who saw him but a moment would have called the repose of his face calmness; but this prolonged and continued calmness, this absence of all grief, and of all tears, had upon me a strange and sad effect. Ah! suffer-

ing must be very inherent in our nature, since William's eternal smile made every one say, 'The poor idiot!' Mothers do not know how much happiness is concealed in their children's tears. A tear is a regret, a desire, a fear; it is existence which is beginning to be understood. Alas! William was satisfied with everything. He seemed to sleep all day with his eyes open; he never hastened his steps nor turned out of his way; he avoided no danger; he was never wearied, nor impatient, nor angry. If he did not know how to obey the words spoken to him, he at least obeyed the hand that guided him. In this existence deprived of all light, there only remained one instinct: he knew his mother, and even loved her. He loved to hang upon her knees and upon her shoulders, and to caress her. When I kept him a long time away from her, a sort of anxiety manifested itself in his movements. When I brought him back to his mother he showed no joy; only he became quiet. This tenderness, this feeble glimpse of William's heart, constituted Eva's life. From that she derived the strength to endeavor to live and to wait. If her words were not understood, at least her caresses were. How often would she take his head between her hands and kiss it—kiss William's brow over and over again, as if she hoped that her love might enkindle that dumb and frozen intellect! How often would she expect a miracle as she press-

ed her son in her arms, and placed William's quiet heart upon her burning heart!

"She would often forget herself of an evening in the village church. (Eva Meredith belonged to a Catholic family). Upon her knees on the stone pavement, before the altar of the Virgin, to the marble statue of the Virgin, holding her son in her arms she would whisper: 'O Virgin, my son is as inanimate as this figure of yours! pray God to grant a mind to my child!'

"She would bestow charity upon all the poor children of the village, giving them bread and clothing, and saying, 'Pray for him!' She consoled those mothers who suffered, in the secret hope that consolation would also come for her. She permitted no tear to fall from the eyes of others, that she might have it in her power to think that she too would cease to weep. Throughout all the province she was beloved, blessed, and venerated; she knew it, and gently offered up to heaven, not with pride, but with hope, the benedictions of the unhappy, that she might thus obtain pity for her son. She loved to look at William when he slept; she then saw him beautiful and like other children; she forgot her misfortune a moment, and in presence of those regular features, those golden locks, those long lashes which threw a shadow upon William's rosy cheek, she was a mother, a mother almost with joy, almost

with pride. Heaven has moments of compassion even for those condemned to suffer.

"Thus rolled by the first eight years of William's life. Then a sad change came over Eva Meredith which could not escape my watchful attention; she ceased to hope, either because the growth of her child rendered his want of intelligence more observable, or because, as a laborer who after working all day yields in the evening to fatigue, Eva's heart seemed to abandon the task which it had undertaken and to fall back in disappointment upon itself, no longer asking of heaven anything but resignation. She gave up the books, the pictures, and the music, and all the other means which she had called to her aid; she became discouraged and silent; only, if it was possible, she grew even more tender with her son. When she ceased to think that he would ever be able to go into society, to acquire friends and to obtain a position, she felt at the same time that her child had no longer any but her on earth; she asked a miracle of her heart—that of increasing the love which she already bore him.

"This woman became the slave and servant of her son; she thought of nothing now but of preserving him from any suffering or discomfort. If a sun-ray fell upon William's face she would get up, and adjust the curtain so as to substitute shade in the place of the too strong light which had wounded

his eyes. If she herself felt cold, she would bring a warmer garment to William; if she herself was hungry, it was for William that she would gather fruits from the garden; if she herself felt fatigued, it was for him that she drew out the great arm-chair and the soft cushions; in a word she attended to her own sensations in order to divine those of her son. Her activity was left, but her hope was gone.

"William became eleven years old; then began the last phase of the existence of Eva Meredith. William, wonderfully large and strong for his age, no longer required that constant and assiduous watching which is necessary in infancy and early childhood; he no longer went to sleep upon his mother's lap; he would walk alone within the enclosure of the garden—he would ride on horseback with me—he would gladly follow me in my expeditions in the mountains; in a word, the bird, although deprived of wings, left his nest.

"There was nothing frightful nor painful to the eye in William's misfortune. He was a boy, lovely as the day, silent, too calm for this world, whose countenance only expressed repose, whose mouth could only smile; he was neither awkward, nor ungraceful, nor troublesome; his was a mind which slumbered in the presence of your own, having neither question to ask nor answer to make. Mrs. Meredith no longer possessed, as a substitute for grief, the activity of the

mother who acts as nurse; she resumed her seat at the window, whence she could look at the village and the church spire—the same place where she had shed so many tears for her first William. She would lean out with her pale face, as if to ask the breeze, which rustled in the trees, to communicate a little freshness to her brow; her arms, hanging passively by her side, like idle or fatigued arms which have nothing more to do in this world. Hope, the necessity for active cares, everything successively abandoned her; she had only now to watch—to watch from afar day and night, like the lamp which burns ever under the dome of a cathedral.

"But her strength was exhausted. In the midst of her grief, returned to its starting point of silence and inactivity, after having tried in vain effort, courage, and hope, Eva Meredith fell into consumption. I saw her, in spite of the resources of my art, grow thin and weak. Of what avail are the physician's remedies when it is the mind which is the seat of disease?

"Poor foreigner! she required the sunshine of her own country and a little happiness to revive her; but she had neither sunshine nor happiness. It was a long time before she perceived her danger, because she did not think of herself; but when she could no longer leave her arm-chair, she could not help understanding her situation. I should not dare to describe to you the anguish of this woman at the thought of

leaving William without a protector and without friends—of leaving him lost in an indifferent world—him whom it was necessary to love and lead by the hand like a child. Oh! how she tried to live! With what avidity she swallowed the medicines which I prepared for her! How often she persisted in thinking herself convalescing! But her disease was progressing. She would then keep William oftener at home; she was unwilling to have him ever again out of her sight.

"'Stay with me,' she would say.

"And William, who was always happy with his mother, would seat himself at her feet. She would gaze at him long, until a torrent of tears prevented her from distinguishing the gentle face of her child; she would then bid him come still nearer to her, would press him to her heart, and exclaim, in a species of delirium:

"'Oh! if my soul, which is about to be separated from my body, could only become my child's soul, how happy I should be to die!'

"Eva could not entirely despair of divine pity; and when all human chances had disappeared, her heart, full of love, had happy dreams from which she again constructed hopes. But alas! how sad it was to see this poor mother dying under her son's eyes—a son who did not understand her, and who smiled when she kissed him!

"'He will not regret me,' she said; 'he will shed no tears over me—he will not even recollect me!'

"And she would sit silently contemplating her child; her hand then would sometimes seek mine:

"'You love him, dear doctor,' she murmured.

"'I will never leave him,' I said, 'until he has better friends.'

"God in heaven and the poor village doctor on earth, are the protectors to whom she confided her son.

"Faith is a wonderful thing! This woman, a widow, disinherited, dying by the side of a son bereft of intelligence, was still far from that unlimited despair which causes some to die blaspheming. An invisible Friend was near her; she seemed to lean upon Him, and, at times, to listen to sacred words audible to her ear alone.

"One morning she sent for me early; she had been unable to leave her bed, and, with her attenuated hand, she pointed to a sheet of paper, upon which some lines were traced.

"'Dear doctor,' she said to me in a gentle voice, 'I have not the strength to continue—finish the letter for me.'

"I read what follows:

"'My lord, I am writing to you for the last time. Whilst health has been restored to you in your old

age, I am sick, and about to die. I leave your grandson, William Kysington, without a protector. My lord, this letter is to recall him to your recollection; I ask less for him your fortune than a place in your heart. Of all things in life, he has only comprehended one, his mother's love. And now I must leave him forever! Love him, my lord; he only understands affection!'

"She had not been able to finish; I added:

"'Lady William Kysington has but a few days to live. What are the orders of Lord James Kysington in reference to the child who bears his name?

"'DOCTOR BARNABÉ.'

"This letter was sent to London, and we waited. Eva was no longer able to leave her bed; William, seated by her side, held, all day long, her hand in his; his mother tried to smile sadly to him; I, on the other side of the bed, prepared the potions to relieve her suffering.

"She again began to talk to her son, as if she did not despair that after her death some words spoken by her might recur to his memory; she gave this child all the advice, all the instructions which she would have given to an intelligent being; and then, turning to me, she said:

"'Who can tell, doctor? perhaps one day he will find my words at the bottom of his heart!'

"A few weeks more were passed. Death was approaching, and, resigned as was Eva's patient soul, this moment brought with it the agony of separation and the solemn terror of the future. The village curate came to see her, and when he left her, I went to him, took his hand, and said:

"'You will pray for her?'

"'I asked her to pray for me!' he answered.

"It was Eva Meredith's last day. The sun had gone down, the window at which she had so often sat, was open; she could look out upon the landscape which she had so dearly loved. She held her son in her arms, and as she kissed his brow and his hair, and as her tears flowed upon his face, she said:

"'Poor child! what is to become of my poor boy? O! listen to me, William: I am dying! your father, too, is dead! you are alone! you must pray to the Lord; I give you to Him who watches over the sparrow on the house-tops! He will watch over the orphan. Dear child, look at me and listen! Try to understand that I am dying, that you may one day remember me!'

"And the poor mother, losing the strength to speak, still retained sufficient to kiss her child.

"At this moment an unaccustomed sound struck my ears. The wheels of a carriage rolled over the

sanded garden road. I ran to the door; Lord James Kysington and Lady Mary were entering the house.

"'I received your letter,' said Lord Kysington to me; 'I was about starting for Italy; it took me but little out of my way to come myself to make arrangements for William Meredith. Lady William?'—

"'Lady William Kysington is still alive,' I answered.

"It was with a feeling of pain that I saw this man, so self-possessed, cold, and austere, walk into Eva's room, followed by that proud woman, who had come to be the witness of an event fortunate for her—the death of her former rival. They entered the little, simple, unpretending room, so different from the magnificent apartments of the Montpellier house. They stood by the bed, within the white curtains of which Eva, pale and still lovely, was holding her son pressed to her heart. They placed themselves, the one to the right, and the other to the left of this bed of suffering, and uttered no word of affection to console the poor creature, whose eyes were raised towards them. A few commonplace, cold expressions of condolence were the only words which escaped from their lips. Never having before been present at a death-bed, they turned away their eyes, and, convinced that Eva Meredith neither saw nor heard them, they simply awaited her decease, without even giving to their countenances an assumed expression

of kind feeling or of regret. Eva fixed her dying eyes upon them, and a new agony suddenly possessed her heart, which had almost ceased to beat. She understood then, as she had never understood before, the secret feelings of Lady Mary, and the profound indifference and egotism of Lord Kysington. She understood at last that they were the enemies, and not the protectors of her son. Despair and terror were painted upon her pale countenance. She made no effort to implore these heartless beings. With a convulsive movement, she drew William still closer to her heart, and, collecting all her strength, exclaimed, with a last kiss:

"'My child, my poor child! you have no friend left on earth; but God above is good. Gracious Father! come to the aid of my unhappy child!'

"With this cry of love, and this last prayer, her life went out; her arms relaxed their hold, and her lips remained motionless upon William's brow. Since she no longer kissed her son, it was certain that she was dead—dead, under the eyes of those who, to the last moment, had refused to extend to her the hand of sympathy—dead, without alarming Lady Mary by the attempt to affect by her prayers a revocation of the pronounced decree—and, by her death, leaving to her a complete and definitive victory.

"A moment of silence succeeded; no one either

moved nor spoke. Death bows the proudest heads. Lady Mary and Lord James Kysington bent their knees at the bedside of their victim. After a few minutes, Lord Kysington arose, and said to me:

"'Remove this child from his mother's room, and follow me, doctor; I will explain to you my intentions in regard to him.'

"For two hours William had been pressed to Eva Meredith's side—his heart to her heart—his mouth to her mouth, receiving both her kisses and her tears. I went to William, and, without addressing useless words to him, endeavored to raise him in order to lead him from the room; but William resisted, and his arms clasped his mother still closer to his heart. This resistance, the first that the poor child had ever opposed to any one, touched me profoundly. However, I renewed the effort, and this time William yielded; he moved, and, turning towards me, I saw his beautiful face bathed in tears. Never before had William wept. A powerful emotion overcame me, and I allowed the child to throw himself again upon his mother's body.

"'Why do you not remove him?' said Lord James Kysington to me.

"'My lord, he is weeping,' I exclaimed. 'Ah! let us permit his tears to flow!'

"I leaned over the child; I heard sobs.

"'William! my dear William!' I said to him,

taking his hand in my own; why do you weep, William?'

"A second time William turned his head towards me; and then with an expression of profound grief, answered:

"'My mother is dead!'

"I have no words to express to you what I felt. There was intelligence in William's eyes; his tears were tears of sadness and not accidental, and the sound of his voice was broken as when the heart is choked by emotion. I uttered a cry, and almost fell upon my knees by Eva's bedside.

"'Ah! you were right, Eva!' I said to her, 'not to despair of the goodness of heaven!'

"Lord James Kysington himself trembled. Lady Mary was as pale as dead Eva.

"'My mother! my mother!' exclaimed William, in tones which filled my heart with joy.

"Then, repeating the words of Eva Meredith, those words which she said that he would find at the bottom of his heart, the child resumed in a loud voice:

"'I am dying, my son; your father is dead; you are alone in the world! You must pray the Lord!'

"I laid my hand gently upon William's shoulder to induce him to kneel; he knelt, clasped, unaided by any one, his two trembling hands, and raising to heaven eyes full of meaning, murmured:

"'My God! have pity upon me!'

"I leaned over Eva and took her cold hand. Eva! Eva! thou who hast suffered so much, canst thou hear thy child? Canst thou see him from above there? Be happy! thy son is saved! poor weeper!

"Eva, stretched dead at Lady Mary's feet, at last made her rival tremble—for it was not I who led William out of the room; it was Lord Kysington who carried his grandson in his arms.

"What more shall I say, ladies? William recovered his reason, and went away with Lord James Kysington. Restored to his rights, he became the only heir of the family estates. Science has recorded a few of these rare instances of intelligence restored by a violent moral shock. So then, the fact which I have related to you is thus explained naturally; but the good women of the village, who had tended Eva Meredith in her illness, and who had listened to her fervent prayers, were convinced that as she had implored heaven, the mother's soul had passed into her child's body.

"'She was so good, they said, that God could refuse nothing to her.'

"This touching belief is universally established among us. No one lamented Eva Meredith as dead.

"She still lives, say the inhabitants of the village; speak to her son, and she will answer you.

"And when Lord William Kysington, after coming into possession of his grandfather's fortune, sent annually the offerings of a bountiful charity to the village which witnessed his birth and his mother's death, the poor exclaimed:

"'It is the kind soul of Mrs. Meredith which is still thinking of us! Ah! when it shall ascend to heaven, the unfortunate will have cause to grieve.'

"'It is not upon her tomb that we strew flowers, but upon the steps of the altar of the Virgin, where she so often prayed that a mind might be given to her son. The villagers offer there bouquets of wild flowers, and say to one another:

"'When she prayed so fervently, the good Virgin answered her inaudibly:

"'I will give thy soul to thy child!'

"The curate never interfered with this touching belief of the peasants; and I, myself, when Lord William came to see me in this village—when he fixed upon me his eyes so like his mother's—when his voice in well-remembered tones said, as she used to say: 'Dear doctor, I thank you!' why then—you may smile ladies, if you will—I shed tears, and I believed with all the village, that Eva Meredith was there before me!

"This woman, whose life was but a series of troubles, has left behind her a sweet, consoling memory, which has nothing painful in it for those who loved

her. In thinking of her, we think of the mercy of God, and if we have a hope at the bottom of our hearts, we hope on with a firmer confidence.

"But it is very late, ladies; your carriages have been standing a long time at the door. Excuse this long story; at my age, it is difficult to be brief when speaking of the recollections of youth. Pardon an old man for having made you smile at his arrival, and weep as you listened to him."

These last words were spoken in the gentlest and most paternal tone, while a suppressed smile played upon Doctor Barnabé's features. Each of his auditors then came to him, and began a thousand thanks; but the village doctor arose, walked to his snuff-colored overcoat which was hanging upon the back of an arm-chair, and, while one of the young people assisted him to put it on, said:

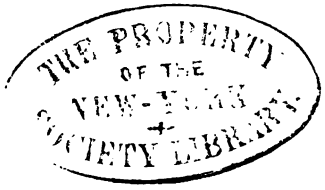
"Farewell, gentlemen; farewell, ladies; my gig is here—it is already quite dark—the road is bad—good night! I must go."

After Doctor Barnabé had taken his seat in his green wicker-work vehicle, and when the little gray horse, tickled by the whip, was on the point of starting, Madame de Moncar came up eagerly, and placing her foot upon the step of the carriage, leaned over to Doctor Barnabé, and said in a low tone:

"Doctor, I give you the white house, and I will

have it arranged exactly as it was when you loved Eva Meredith."

She then disappeared; and the carriages and the green gig started off in different directions.



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